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THE

H O M I C I D E.

A Novel.

TAKEN FROM THE

COMEDIE DI GOLDONI,

BY MARY CHARLTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE WIFE AND MISTRESS," &c.

The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour;

With Cain go wander through the shade of night,
And never show thy head—

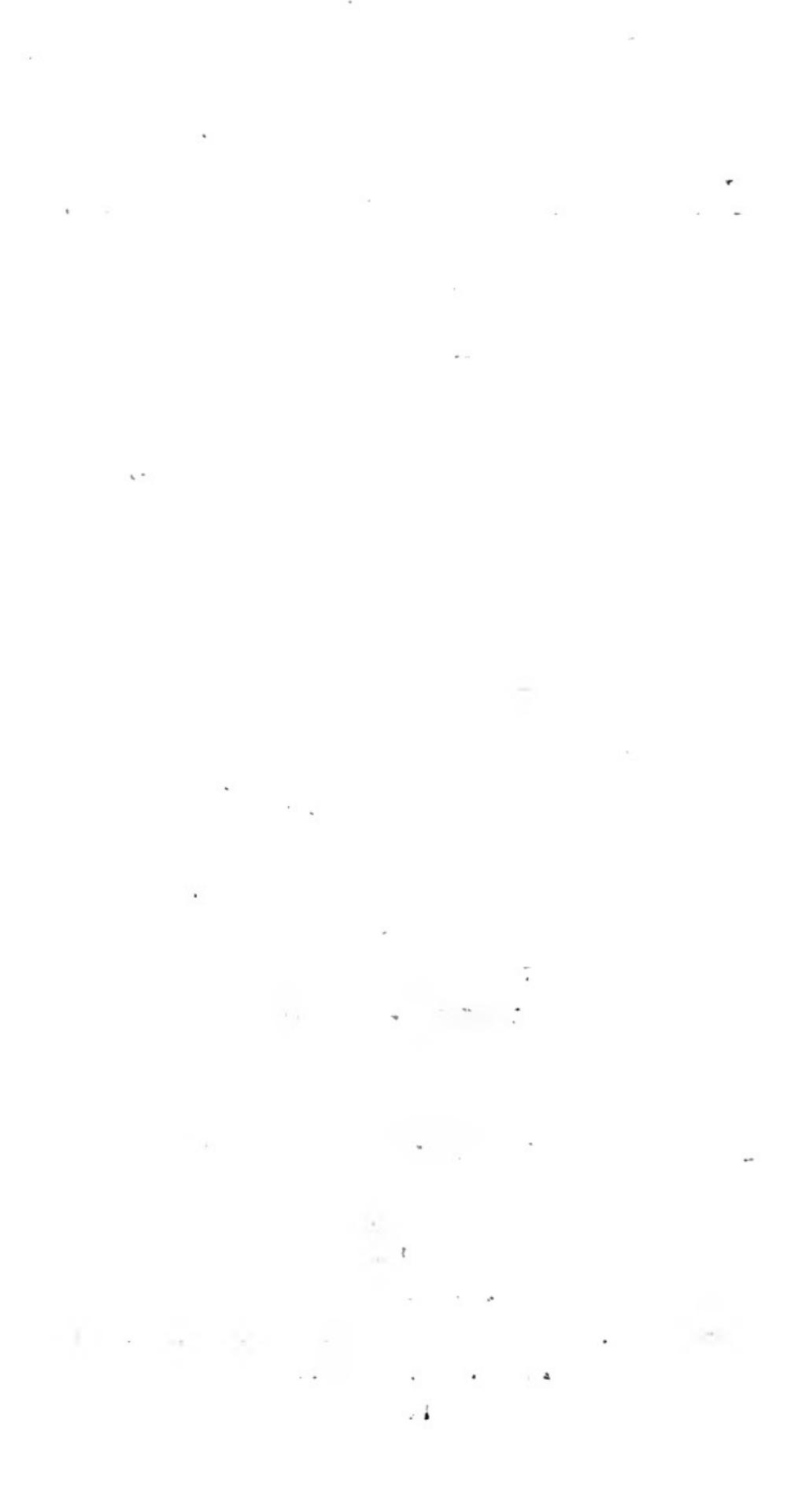
RICHARD II.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE

H O M I C I D E.

CHAP. I.

ROSAURA DI VIRALVA was descended from an ancient Neapolitan family, whose honours had been less impaired at the time of her birth, than the possessions that two or three centuries back had given weight and importance to a noble and unblemished name, which now was all the inheritance of the youthful Rosaura, and of her cousin Julio, the last

male descendant of the Viralvas, who still retained the title of Marquis.

Rosaura was an orphan, and found herself, at the first dawn of reason, under the protection of Signor Astolfo di Boschero, her maternal uncle, and of Rodegonda, his wife, who sent her to a provincial Convent for education, and conducted her, at the age of eighteen, from the vicinity of Gaeta, where they lived on a small estate, to Naples, the capital, in the hope of marrying her advantageously; or if this design failed, they meant to place her in a Convent, where portionless young women of rank were received without a dower, and where her beauty and her illustrious name would be equally buried in oblivion under the black veil. Signor Astolfo and his wife preferred the first plan, not from consideration to their niece, but because it promised certain pecuniary advantages to themselves, they could not hope to derive from the other.

Poor

Poor Rosaura!—she yet retained that sweet vivacity which the gay dreams of youth inspire; nor could the vivid beams of her dark and smiling eye penetrate into the futurity that awaited her. Decayed indeed was the opulence of her house; but naked poverty had not yet stepped into the breach Time had made, nor withered with her chilling breath, the mantling tints that stole over her downy cheek: yet had she never been nurtured and cherished by her natural friends with the kindness and affection she was formed to inspire; for Signor Astolfo was generally gloomy, silent, and morose; and Rodegonda peevish, fretful, and suspicious. Rosaura did not, however, repine at her fate; nor could these dispositions of mind so opposite to her own, in any degree disturb her serenity, or entirely repel her gaiety. When Signora Rodegonda raised her shrill voice in indignation or anger, and when her uncle growled his fulminations, she soothed, and smiled, and

persuaded : it was the sweet note of the nightingale responding to the blast of the summer tempest.

At Naples, Signor Astolfo sought out the friends and associates of his early years, and presented to them his lovely charge, who excited in various minds surprise, interest, envy, and admiration ; and she had not long appeared in the world, ere the Cavaliere di Ruvello beheld her, followed her, and at length demanded her of her uncle, who readily gave the expected assent, because the lover was opulent ; and though he ranked in the class of modern nobility, yet he could not be regarded as a plebeian even by a Viralva.

Rosaura started, and shrank involuntarily when her fate was abruptly announced to her by her aunt and Signor Astolfo. She would have hesitated ; but they pursued her with a torrent of angry argument, eagerly reverting to the cares bestowed upon her helpless childhood, and their

their unremitting attention to her real welfare, her real advantage.

"I admit it all," said she with her accustomed gentleness. "When you forget the benefits you have conferred upon me, my heart will remind you of them. I will obey you; yet I would learn—tell me only that the character of Signor Ruvello is such, that I may reasonably expect to taste of happiness, whilst I am content to court it with virtue and moderation?"

Having received the strongest assurances upon this point, Rosaura imagined herself obliged to yield her assent; yet she wished most earnestly to be allowed to ascertain the temper and disposition of Signor Ruvello, from her own observation, ere she formed with him so solemn an engagement: but she was urged, teased, caressed, and importuned by her aunt and Signor Astolfo, and finally—led to the altar.

Signor Ruvello testified his gratitude not only in repeated liberalities to herself

and her overjoyed relations, who now found their aim accomplished to its utmost extent, but in every attention that tenderness could suggest, or love devise. In one respect, however, he chose to consult his own taste in preference to her's ; she wished to be moderate in her expenditure, and he desired that every thing appertaining to her, should be magnificent : her jewels, therefore, her equipage, her attendants, and her habitation displayed at once his wealth and his attachment. Her concerts and her conversazioni were the most brilliant in Naples, the most distinguished of whose Nobles eagerly courted the happiness of becoming the Cavalieri Serventi of the beautiful Signora Ruvello. But these dangerous posts of honour were already appropriated, at the entreaty of her husband, to two of his most favoured associates, one of whom, the Marquis D'Asavoli, Rosaura had been presented to before her marriage, and had conceived a dislike to him the first five minutes

minutes of the interview, which no secret argument of her candour against sudden prepossessions, could afterwards subdue. The other Cavaliere was absent from Naples; but as Ruvello hourly expected his return, he obtained without much difficulty, that Rosaura would not supersede him: yet days, and even weeks passed by, and the Count del Orvino, for so he was named, was still detained in Sicily by the dangerous indisposition of a favourite sister; and when his immediate return was announced, the curiosity of Rosaura to behold a man whom every one mentioned with the highest consideration, was much diminished by her concern for the approaching departure of her uncle and his wife. The separation she contemplated, banished from her recollection all that was unamiable in the character of each, and presented only to her affectionate bosom, the trouble and anxiety she must have cost them; and that for her advantage alone, they had

quitted their home, to encounter the fatigue, and undergo the penance of emerging so late in life, into a world they had for many years quitted in disgust. That Signor Astolfo had appropriated a little portion which had been committed to his care with herself, was a secret which he alone knew, and could not therefore diminish her idea of his justice or generosity; and when his wife and himself quitted her with an apparent warmth of regret and affection, that brought a flood of tears to her eyes, she shut herself up in her own apartment; and refusing admittance to the crowd who thronged her gate, wept the absence of the only natural friends she had in the world, save her cousin Julio, whom she loved as a brother.

As the evening advanced, she threw open the lattices of her windows; and refusing lights or attendance, sat at a balcony, which gave to her view the whole of the bay, whose waves, as they rolled on

on to the shore, were successively gilded by the beams of the moon, just risen beyond them.

"Strange," thought Rosaura, "that I am, by the usages of the world, torn from the friends of my early youth—that in future I must wholly depend upon a being I have so lately known—form new connexions, welcome new associates, accustom these weeping eyes to scenes they can never love half so well as those I have quitted perhaps for ever!"

Her reflections were at this moment interrupted by a carriage stopping at the portico; but as she had given directions to be denied to every one, she could not fear any intrusion, and pursued her mournful contemplations, which were however, soon disturbed by steps, that evidently approached from the adjacent room. The door was open, and to the voice of Ruvello she instantly replied.

He hastened to her.

"Those plaintive accents," exclaimed

he, "and this seclusion, reproach my thoughtless absence!"

Then drawing her towards the balcony, and earnestly regarding her countenance—

"And a tell-tale tear," he added, "upon that lovely cheek! Forgive me, Rosaura——"

"Forgive me," interrupted she. "The recent departure of friends so beloved, challenges my regrets; but my affection for them shall not interfere with other duties equally dear and revered. Tell me," continued she, in a more cheerful accent, "are your expectations realized? Is Count Orvino at length arrived?"

"Yes, he arrived three hours since, and his first visit is to you. How will you receive this truant cicisbeo?"

"As one whom you love, and whom the world esteems," replied she. "His merit is well attested by the complaints his absence has produced."

"Come forward then, my friend,"

said Ruvello, “ and take the welcome my Rosaura offers !”

Rosaura started.

“ I did not understand,” said she, “ that the Count accompanied you. I fear I have been strangely negligent in not sooner expressing my satisfaction that Count del Orvino is restored to you and the rest of his Neapolitan friends.”

To this address the Count, whose figure Rosaura now discerned, bowed in silence; whilst Ruvello called for lights and refreshments, which were instantly brought : but she could not immediately distinguish the features of her new Cavaliere ; for having sat a considerable time in the twilight, the glare of the tapers for a few moments incommoded her.

“ Now then,” exclaimed Ruvello, “ the favourite wish of my heart is gratified, since my Rosaura and Orvino are known to each other ! He is accepted then, as your Cavaliere Servente ;—and

you, Orvino, are still willing to favour my Rosaura with your attendance?"

"I should be extremely mortified," replied he, "to find my services rejected or disapproved."

"Surely," thought Rosaura, "this acquiescence is very cold and reluctant!"

"To-morrow," he added, "if Signora Ruvello will allow me, I will attend her."

"Do so," said Ruvello: "but let me hint to you that you have a very assiduous competitor in Asavoli, and you must not allow him to distance you."

The reply of the Count was not so lively or so gallant as a woman of more vanity than Rosaura would have expected; and even her car had lately been so accustomed to adulation, that she imagined him indifferent, if not averse to the situation in which Ruvello was so eager to place him.

"How absurd are our modes and customs!"

“ customs!” exclaimed Rosaura when the friends had left her. “ Ruvello dares not accompany me, when I have passed the threshold of his own door, although he tells me it is painful to him to deprive himself of my society! And a yet stronger instance of the tyranny of prejudice is Signor Merchini, who is in agonies of jealousy when his wife is not at his elbow, and who yet overcomes his feelings, from the fear of incurring the censure of the world, which discourses and ridicules his perpetual combats and inquietudes, whilst the unfortunate object of his capricious passion is compelled, by the accustomary usages of society, and by him, to accept the constant attendance of two Cavaliers who are as little regarded by her as the Volanti that run before her carriage. For myself, who dislike the Marquis d'Asavoli, I find myself obliged to conceal my sentiments, and tolerate him, that I may not displease my husband in the person of his friend, and involve him perhaps in a contention.

contention. The Count del Orvino, indeed, appears amiable and pleasing, notwithstanding the reserve I could not but remark. To whatever this may be owing, I shall certainly prefer him to the other: but this preference must not escape me, lest the Marquis should complain of a partiality which the world will not allow: yet how difficult shall I find it to conduct myself with a species of hypocrisy I have never yet had occasion to practise, and which I cannot approve, however necessary I may find it. I must therefore discourage my increasing aversion to the Marquis; and perhaps I may shortly discover some unpleasing quality in my new Cavaliere Servente, to obscure in my imagination the fine expression of an aspect, in which candour and intelligence are so exquisitely blended. The Count was very silent, and he evidently regarded me with a criticising eye: perhaps he condemns the weak partiality of his friend, which has raised me from obscurity

obscurity and indigence, to a situation which may only illustrate the imperfections that would otherwise have never been observed. Alas ! neither obscurity nor indigence had the power of chasing peace from my bosom, or perfect contentment from my mind ! Shall I not miss them in affluence and elevation ? Heaven only knows ! but, Oh may Heaven grant that I deserve to retain them !—and let Fortune sport with me as she pleases !”

When Ruvello returned home, he failed not to enquire of Rosaura her opinion of the Count.

“ He has lost some of his vivacity in his Sicilian expedition,” added he ; “ but you will agree with the world, that he is a very accomplished Cavaliere.”

“ His appearance is certainly very prepossessing,” replied she, “ and announces him to be a man of sense.”

“ You do not then regret having rejected the services of the Duke di Brandosí,

dosi, or his handsome nephew?" asked Ruvello eagerly.

"No, indeed," replied Rosaura; "you cannot doubt that I shall always prefer those whom you love, and who deserve your esteem, to any one who does not possess the same recommendation to my good opinion. In this instance I shall doubly prefer your friends, because I hope their testimony of my conduct will prove to you that I have a proper sense of your generous love, and of the decorum due to my own character and your honour."

"Do not suspect, however," said Ruvello with a smile, "that I mean to establish either Orvino or Asavoli as observers or censors of your actions. The Marquis has long been my friend; and he so earnestly entreated my interest to procure him the honour of becoming your Cavaliere, that I could not refuse him—nor did I wish to refuse him: but for Orvino, I confess to you my vanity is gratified by his

his attendance upon you, because half of the women of Naples have eagerly and vainly wished to attach him to themselves."

"I fear then," returned Rosaura, "the distinction you have sought to procure me, will not be unaccompanied by danger. To become the envy of disappointed vanity, is to be in a situation I should wish to fly from. You tell me you do not mean to establish observers or censors of my conduct. If I said any thing that appeared to intimate such a suspicion, I disavow words that carry a meaning I never intended to give them: I suspect only that you are too indulgent, and that I may too soon forget I am liable to all the errors and follies of youth and inexperience. Be you my observer—my censor when I err. Promise me this, and I shall feel more assured and more happy."

"Most amiable and lovely of creatures!" exclaimed Ruvello, "who can deserve

deserve you ? Under what propitious planet was my destiny traced, when such a treasure was ordained to me ! ”

The next morning at an early hour, both Asavoli and the Count Orvino attended to offer their devoirs ; and in the course of their visit, Rosaura observed that they neither liked nor esteemed each other. The Marquis often cast upon Orvino, as he conversed with her, a regard at once disdainful and indignant, and appeared to think that he was more attended to than he deserved to be ; whilst the Count almost wholly disregarding him, neither perceived his petulance, nor soothed the offended feelings of a man who was enraged to find himself surpassed in those qualities that engage admiration, by one who apparently excited it without effort or design.

Rosaura, insensibly engaged by the charms of a conversation which at once amused her imagination and satisfied her judgment, vainly endeavoured to bestow

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an equal portion of her smiles and her attention upon Asavoli, who was too much occupied with the sensations occasioned by mortified vanity, to take a satisfactory share in it. He was, however, soon relieved by the entrance of several ladies and a numerous train of attending Cavaliers, who effectually impeded any rational conversation ; and Orvino was now compelled to attend to the eager enquiries, and numerous lamentations upon his long absence, which were poured upon him from every quarter. The ear of Rosaura was at the same time assailed by the warmest congratulations upon the triumph of having obtained so amiable a Cavaliere Servente ; and she was even cautioned, in a half-jesting accent, against the vindictive emotions of several slighted ladies of high distinction.

“ This is formidable indeed ! ” exclaimed she, when the assemblage had dispersed, and she found herself alone in her apartment ; “ and were not this
Orvino

Orvino the most pleasing of men—yet to me he should not be so. My gratitude is not engaged to *him*; my approbation, my esteem, my affection are attracted elsewhere by kindness, and solicitude, and love: even for the satisfaction his society may afford me, I am indebted to Ruvello. Ever, ever let me recollect this!"

The entrance of Ruvello himself interrupted her reverie: he was in high spirits, regarded her with admiration, embraced her with tenderness, and, finally, informed her that he was not disappointed in the opinion his friend Orvino had formed of her.

The evening brought the two Cavalieri Serventi to offer their emulative services; and Rosaura received them with equal complacency and grace. She felt, however, much relieved when the Countess Almerini, of the family of Ruvello, called in on her way to the Corso; and finding that Rosaura meant to pass an hour there, she allowed a Cavaliere who attended her, leave

leave of absence; and dismissing her carriage, desired a place in that of her fair cousin, who assented with great alacrity, though the character of the Countess was far from being approved by her, and her society was almost displeasing: yet she actually preferred it to the novelty she could not immediately accustom herself to, of being accompanied only by two men, to whom she had so lately been a perfect stranger.

The Countess regarded the brilliant equipage as she passed to it, with an indignant sensation of contemptuous anger she could scarcely controul. The costliness and splendour of the carriage, the number of attendants, the richness of the liveries, the beauty of the horses, the elegant equipment of the Volanti, or running footmen, who preceded them, and the gay adornments of the harness, had seldom indeed been exceeded even in Naples, where this species of luxury is so common.

The

The Count offered his hand to Rosaura ; and Asavoli at the same moment presenting his, she was rather embarrassed ; but after hesitating a moment, she indicated by a motion, that Orvino should conduct the Countess Almerini, who observed all that had passed, and felt her displeasure inconceivably aggravated, that a creature whom she secretly detested for her youth, her beauty, and her celebrity, and whom she equally scorned for the poverty she had been raised from by the infatuation of one of her own family, should thus command the homage of the most accomplished Cavaliere in Naples.

The eyes of Asavoli triumphed at the little preference he had obtained ; and never had he appeared in those of Rosaura so unpleasing, as at this moment when he was exulting in her supposed favour. He was now in a talkative mood, and the Countess was far from being silent ; so that the subjects discussed, were to her uninteresting and insipid.

The

The carriage had scarcely entered the Corso, when that of Signora Merchini passed it in the opposite line.

"Oh the unfortunate!" exclaimed Countess Almerini, after having returned her salutation with even more affectation of interest than Rosaura unconsciously displayed. "How melancholy she appears!—sitting immovable like a statue of ice, and freezing her cicisbeos into silence and distant respect! What a miserable existence is her's!"

"She is so amiable a woman," observed Rosaura, "her sentiments and manners are so gentle and pleasing, that I should be happy to obtain her friendship."

"Is the sadness her fine aspect betrays, occasioned by any family misfortune?" demanded Count Orvino.

"Oh, I had forgotten your long seclusion," returned the Countess: "you have not heard then, that it has been discovered through the indiscretion of her page and her

her woman, that Signor Merchini is dying with jealousy, and that he was the secret occasion of all those apparent caprices in her conduct, which were so much spoken of in the earlier part of their marriage. But enough of her. Here come the Princess di Parmeno and her new Cavaliere, the Duke di Brandosi—what could induce you to reject his services, my dear little cousin?"

"The preference occasioned by the recommendation of Signor Ruvello," replied Rosaura, who thought the question at that moment, a very indiscreet one.

"Ah, Count Orvino!" resumed the lady, "what a vile compliment is this to your superior merit! Could I, or could any one have supposed that your attendance is accepted, from the mere recommendation of a husband!"

"I am gratified to find it so," replied he, "as it proves to me that my friend thinks me worthy of his confidence and good opinion, and I hope it will advance me in those of Signora Ruvello."

"Oh,

"Oh, your sentiments are very sublime!" said the Countess carelessly. "Here is the superb equipage of Signora Carucci, and Ruvello, as usual, assiduously attending her!" added she. "My good cousin has certainly an excellent taste, for she is extremely handsome: but I am sure neither Ruvello nor any other Cavaliere Servente, was ever accepted by her at the recommendation of her old husband!"

There was something in these insinuations that excited the indignation of Orvino in a very apparent degree; for he darted at the speaker, several looks of severe reprobation, that for the moment silenced her.

"Not only with respect to Signora Carucci has Ruvello given some proof of taste," observed the Marquis Asavoli, "but in another instance he has undeniably evinced it; and his good genius has given him a proof equally strong of her prevailing influence over his fortunate destiny."

"Must I be perpetually fated to listen to such insipid, such heartless nonsense?" secretly exclaimed Rosaura, turning from him in impatient disgust, and affecting to be occupied in regarding the carriages that successively passed.

"That lady is unknown to you," said Orvino, alluding to a personage whom he believed her to have noticed.

"But she must not continue so," exclaimed the Countess hastily: "it is the old Marchesa Bernini. I must introduce you to each other. She is now quitting the Corso to receive her friends; and I will affirm that you will not meet in Naples, a society more charming or more distinguished than that which assembles at her house."

"It must then be exceedingly improved within these few months," said Orvino gravely; "for assuredly, when I left Naples, the assemblies of the Marchesa Bernini would not have been entitled to

solicit or expect the favourable attention of Signora Ruvello."

"Your Sicilian tour has not much improved the urbanity of your manners," retorted the lady with the passionate indignation of an Italian Countess: "for you are become insupportable; and your philippics are bitter, but they want wit."

"Pardon my inadvertence," replied he coolly; "I entirely forgot that the Marchioness Bernini was your friend."

Rosaura, who beheld the fire flashing from the eyes of the offended lady, and swell every feature of her face, exerted herself to prevent any further altercation; but when, on quitting the Corso, Countess Almerini requested her to order her carriage to the Bernini Palace, that she might immediately have the satisfaction of convincing her that the conversazioni of the Marchioness were as respectable as any in Naples, Orvino could scarcely command his indignation: but he was rather

appeased, when he heard her decline it for that evening, under pretext of a slight indisposition.

After what had passed upon the subject, Rosaura felt entirely averse to the proposed introduction; but as she was extremely unwilling to offend Countess Almerini, or any part of the family of her husband, she proposed to herself to consult him ere she decided, and be wholly influenced by his opinion.

Soon after her return home, whither the Countess thought proper to accompany her, and where of course the Cavaliers were compelled to attend her, the party of Rosaura became very numerous, and Orvino found an opportunity, whilst the principal part of the society was wholly occupied with the delightful agonies of the card-table, to entreat that she would pardon the officiousness of his interposition when the Marchioness Berlioni was mentioned to her.

“ The character of a mere Cavaliere Servente,”

Servente," said Rosaura, smiling, "is too insignificant for Count Orvino, and perhaps that of a Mentor will be troublesome; but I am ever thankful to receive any intimation that may prevent me the mortification of passing even an hour in the society of people I particularly dislike. It is surely sufficient," added she, casting an expressive glance around her, "to be surrounded by the insipid and the dissipated, without heightening our disgust by vice or licentiousness."

Asavoli, who had jealously observed the interchange of what appeared a confidential sentence, now interrupted them; and for the remainder of the evening, Rosaura was compelled to listen complacently to the ebullitions of folly and satire, and reply to them without betraying her feelings.

It was considerably past midnight when the party retired; and Countess Almerici, who with Asavoli and Orvino, had remained a few moments after the throng,

maliciously enquired of Rosaura if the absence of Ruvello occasioned the gravity of her aspect.

" My dear little cousin, you must not be unreasonable," added she ; " for I assure you he will not in future be able to escape from the enchantments of Signora Carucci, as he possibly may have done hitherto. A solitary home, and the poor old man, her husband, have no charms for her ; and besides, Ruvello is the most favoured of her Cavaliers."

The countenance of Orvino now assumed a sternness very unusual to it, whilst that of Rosaura betrayed no indication of the quietude she was probably expected to feel.

" I am grateful to Signora Carucci," replied she in a cheerful accent, " for the preference you mention. I should be mortified to suspect that the attendance of Signor Ruvello was not received with pleasure by any lady to whom it was offered."

" You

" You are then particularly obliged to Signora Carucci," said the Marquis ; " for it is more than six months since my friend Ruvello first attached himself to her, and it is singular that she never yet retained a Cavalier so long in her service."

" I invite myself to sup with you," said the Countess, " and the Marchese d'Asavoli and Count Orvino will remain likewise. Ruvello will return ere the sun rises, but not before the morning dawns : do not therefore wait for his appearance."

Rosaura with some effort retained a show of complacency she was far from feeling: the pain in her head, which in the early part of the evening she had affected to suffer from, now really attacked her ; and the persecutions of the Countess, in which she insultingly persevered, almost overpowered the natural sweetness of her temper.

At length she was left to herself and to

repose; but her mind was disturbed, and her spirits affected: and having dismissed her attendants, she remained at a half-closed lattice, to refresh her aching head, and breathe a purer air.

The prediction of the Countess was just, for the morning dawned ere Ruvello sought his home; but when Rosaura heard the carriage stop at the door, she hastened to her chamber, that he might not suspect the anxiety with which the last two or three hours had been passed.

CHAP. II.

THE next morning Ruvello had not left the house when Count Orvino was announced to Rosaura, who then only recollects that she had meant to consult her husband upon the propriety of allowing herself to be introduced to the conversazioni of the Marchioness Bernini. A few moments after the entrance of the Count, she took occasion to mention to Ruvello the intention of his cousin Almerini to conduct her thither the preceding evening.

"And why did you not acquiesce with this intention?" demanded he.

"I have more than once heard the sentiments and conduct of the Marchesa discussed," replied she, casting an involuntary glance at Orvino, "in a manner unfavourable to her character."

"And in what, my dear Rosaura," exclaimed Ruvello, "can the sentiments, or even the conduct of a woman of rank be censurable, who gives the most superb of entertainments in the place she lives in?"

"Allowing this sarcasm upon the world to be just," said Orvino, "I must still observe to you, my friend, that I have encountered a set of people at the Bernini Palace with whom Signora Ruvello would be ill associated indeed! And can you allow, can you wish——"

"If she must necessarily avoid the characters you allude to," interrupted Ruvello, rather peevishly, "Rosaura must confine herself wholly to her own habitation; for they are to be found every where: but with a Cavaliere so discreet and prudent as

as my friend Orvino," he added laughingly, "she may venture even to the Bernini Palace, where I really think the society is very unexceptionable; and as the conversazioni of the Marchioness have lately become very much frequented, and are very brilliant, I wish her to be seen there."

"It is then your wish that I avail myself of the intention of Countess Almerini?" asked Rosaura.

"By all means," replied Ruvello. "Adieu, Orvino!—an indispensable engagement calls me hence: be attentive to my Rosaura, but do not alarm her timid imagination with certain chimeras that infest yours, and allow her to judge mankind with more candour and less philosophy!"

Ruvello then vanished, leaving the Cavaliere Servente to decide with his wife upon the disposition of the next twelve hours. For a few moments after his exit, Orvino was silent, and Rosaura sunk

into a reverie, from which his voice recalled her.

"Have you not received a billet from Asavoli this morning?" demanded the Count. "I understand that his uncle, the Archbishop, is dangerously ill."

Whilst Rosaura was replying, the Marquis himself entered; and after the customary salutations, confirmed the intelligence of Orvino, and entreated leave of absence for the evening, to which Rosaura assented with more satisfaction than she chose to display. After this ceremonial, she entirely expected that the afflicted nephew would return to the sick chamber of the Archbishop; but Asavoli appeared determined to console himself for his enforced absence during the evening, by a long morning interview; and when the party was increased by two or three ladies and their Cavalieri, he still remained.

In fact, he was very unwilling that Orvino should find an opportunity of renewing the *tête-à-tête* he congratulated himself

himself upon having interrupted, at least for that morning ; and he entered into the chit-chat of the hour with great apparent interest, even increasing the news of the day by informing the circle that a certain Prince and Princess were in complete disgrace."

" Most assuredly," said a lady, " it is so ; for they were not honoured yesterday with a single regard, and I have heard it affirmed that they are not to be invited to the next gala."

" This is a reverse as sudden as it is unexpected," observed Rosaura, who alone of any one present, felt an emotion of compassion for the fallen favourites.—" Has the occasion of it transpired ?"

" It has been affirmed," replied Orvino, smiling, " that the unlucky Prince brought down a bird in the last shooting party, which the King had missed."

" But why is the Princess implicated in the offence?" demanded another lady.

" Did

"Did she eat of the bird which her husband had shot?"

"Worse, 'a thousand times!'" replied one of her Cavalieri; "she related the circumstance to her friend, who repeated it to another friend, who whispered it to the whole Court."

"*Evviva!*" exclaimed the lady; "I always supposed the Princess to be a woman of wonderful discretion!"

At length the subject being totally exhausted, was abandoned for another equally interesting, till the dangerous malady of the Archbishop came under discussion; and under the idea of condolence, Asavoli was very adroitly congratulated upon his near prospect of inheriting a little mine of wealth amassed by the Reverend Prelate.

When the party had separately departed, the Marquis expressed his hope that he should be honoured by the commiseration of Rosaura, for the sacrifice he was compelled to make.

"Pardon

"Pardon me," returned she with a symptom of disgust but too evident; "the insensible being who has not a heart to fulfil the tender duties of affection to a suffering friend, is much more worthy of commiseration than yourself; for those who never experience interest for a fellow-creature in affliction, will seldom inspire it: but you, Signor Marchese, who will assuredly taste the satisfaction of softening, by the most assiduous cares, the sick bed of your uncle, will be entitled to applause, not commiseration; and that you may not find your mind disturbed by the neglected ceremonials of politeness, I entreat that you will not think it in any degree necessary to return hither until your uncle be perfectly recovered."

The Marquis appeared chagrined rather than flattered by this dispensation; and he observed, with an ironical air, that the arrival of Count Orvino in Naples was fortunately timed, as it gave him the assurance

assurance that she would be attended, during his unexpected banishment, by a Cavaliere equally assiduous, and much more happy in the power of inspiring approbation than himself."

Rosaura felt abashed by this insinuation, and the treacherous tint that mounted to her cheek, betrayed the emotion it inspired: but a moment sufficed to restore her to recollection; and perceiving that Orvino, whose eye sparkled with indignation, was on the point of replying—

" You are in an error, Signor Marchese," said she hastily; " I have ever heard my husband mention you with an esteem equal to that he professes for Count Orvino. I respect his judgment; and with me, an equality of merit will ever challenge an equal portion of respect and attention."

Asavoli, who had already repented his too unguarded acrimony, compelled himself to receive this ambiguous compliment with complacency; and whilst Orvino secretly

secretly applauded the presence of mind and prudence Rosaura had displayed, she was forming a resolution to curb in future her conscious aversion to the Marquis, from whose almost open jealousy of the associated attendance of Orvino, she foreboded consequences inimical to her peace.

The Count easily discerning that she wished the absence of his competitor, and as he perceived with equal facility that Asavoli would not quit the house without him, he proposed that they should walk together to the Strada Toledo, in which was the palace of the Archbishop. This was assented to ; and Orvino having learned the intentions of Rosaura for the evening, departed with her more turbulent cicisbeo.

A few moments after they had left her, Signora Merchini was announced, who was attended by her Cavalieri, and the conversation was therefore of a general nature ; yet Rosaura found the interest
she

she had hitherto felt for her, much heightened by this interview ; and at her departure, Signora Merchini, taking her hand with an unequivocal demonstration of respect and good-will, mentioned a particular hour in the morning in which she was generally to be found at home, and alone.

“ My heart is not satisfied with these casual and constrained meetings,” said she in a low tone ; “ I would obtain what you think perhaps I do not merit—the more particular regard of Signora Ruvello. I believe my health declines,” added she, with a sigh ; “ but it might be sustained by the sweet consolations of friendship. In you alone I behold a being capable of a sentiment sufficiently tender and disinterested, to share a sorrow I must not reveal.”

Rosaura felt a tear rush to her eye ; and whilst she endeavoured to conceal a sensibility that might speak too forcibly to the sensitive soul of the fair sufferer, she

she promised to avail herself of the intimation which created a sentiment at once so painful and so pleasing to her.

When Signora Merchini had left her, Rosaura reflecting upon the peculiar misery of her situation, regretted that she had not sufficient resolution to insist upon withdrawing from a world, that only mocked her misery, and sported with her inquietudes.

"In retirement," thought she, "this amiable and unfortunate woman might at least indulge the sadness which relieves the heart, if the countenance may wear it unrestrained and unreproved. She wishes to obtain a friend! Is a friend then so difficult to be obtained? Are friendship and affection so seldom experienced? I cannot think it; since my own observations, my own sensations assure me that the intercourse which mutual esteem and good-will enliven, bestows happiness upon either party—a happiness I have never tasted from the moment that placed me in this

this sumptuous mansion, and encompassed me with a splendour that dazzled and confounded, but never pleased me!—Ungrateful Rosaura!—yet I am not an ingrate; for I would sacrifice my taste, my inclinations, and my peace, could I but ensure to Ruvello the contentment I give up. I would fain cultivate for him a sentiment more warm than gratitude; but I see him so seldom! The world deprives me of his society, and renders mine tasteless and insipid to him—the world intervenes, and disunites us! Before I knew this world, when I existed in a solitude which its votaries fear and contemn, every impulse of my heart was unchecked and free. With what delight I flew to the cottage of old Antonio! From afar I could recognise his white hair, his furrowed aspect, and his tottering step; and from afar I could distinguish the spinning wheel and the tongue of his good old wife. Would I could see them now, and hear the blessings they called

called down upon my head! When they commended the freshness of my youth, and exclaimed, with admiration upon the beauty their partiality created, was it vanity that gave an emotion so pleasing to my soul? Ah no!—it was the sweet consciousness of being beloved by these worthy creatures!—it was that answering affection that stripped their infirm age of all that renders it an object of disgust to an indifferent heart, and pictured them only as objects of reverence and love! The good Abbess too—in her I discerned not the austerity and gloom which strangers have remarked—I felt only her piety and her benevolence; whilst she overlooked the giddiness, the waywardness, the follies of childhood, and took me to her bosom. Oh friendship! if thou canst smooth such inequalities—if thou canst unite in thy gentle bands, beings so opposed—if thou canst induce the young to regard with pleasure the ravages of time, and the sad aspect of decay—if thou canst

canst compel the aged to contemplate with rapture the youth they must never more enjoy, and draw a saint from Heaven's altar to bend at thine, why art thou not more felt, more understood!—why has the unfortunate who has now quitted me, vainly asked of fate a friend—and why have I, alas! been torn from mine?"

Absorbed in her reflections, Rosaura continued in the same seat and in the same position she had taken when Signora Merchini left her, until her reverie was interrupted by the entrance of her woman, who had been employed by her on a mission of benevolence; and as the attendant rendered an account of it, the usual spirits and alacrity of Rosaura revived.

The objects of her compassionate attention were the numerous family of a miserable Lazzarone, who, in crossing a street with an enormous load upon his back, could not exert a sufficient activity to

to profit by the warning of the Volanti, and had fallen under the wheel of a carriage that was passing, which broke his leg, and bruised him severely. The unfortunate man was taken to a neighbouring infirmary, and received within it ; whilst Rosaura, who had witnessed the accident, sent one of her servants to enquire if he had any family, and to learn where they lived, if the answer should affirm it.

By this domestic she was informed that the poor fellow, in the height of his agony, had not ceased to bewail the wretched fate of his wife and children, whose daily bread almost wholly depended upon his labour, and that they all existed in a hut leading to Pausilippo, whither a testimony of her bounty had been immediately conveyed, of sufficient importance to console them for the misadventure, as it was not a fatal one.

Rosaura had likewise desired an account of the ages of the children ; and the mother,

mother, who was a woman of an appearance much more decent than her situation promised, had herself brought it ; and prostrating herself at the entrance of the mansion, poured out her benedictions upon the fair alleviator of her misery. Her grateful transports were beheld by Rosaura from a balcony, and she desired that the woman might be conducted to the antichamber of her dressing room, where she conversed with her for some time, and discovered that her husband had formerly been a daily laquais in a noble family ; but being overtaken by sickness and other unavoidable calamities, he had been reduced to his present miserable situation. The woman added that her eldest daughter, who was nearly seventeen, was of a modest and quiet disposition ; but, to their great regret, she had no means of raising her, by any effort of industry, from the abject situation into which they were all plunged.

“ I will take her into my household,”
said

said Rosaura, “ and I charge myself with her advancement, should she prove diligent and attentive.”

“ Ah, Signora Illustrissima, you are goodness itself !” exclaimed the mother. “ But, alas ! we cannot give her the clothing that would be necessary.”

“ Leave that point to me,” interrupted Rosaura : and to remove this little impediment to the instant promotion of the girl, had been the business of Costanza, the femme de chambre.

When her Lady had received an account of the mission, the recollection of the service she was rendering to her more hapless fellow-creatures, inspired her heart with its wonted gaiety, and the vivacity of her aspect revived with it. Orvino, who returned early in the evening, was much struck with that brilliant and indefinable expression which those features alone can wear, that are animated with a spark of divine emanation, and exult in the goodness of conscious virtue. No

cloud had yet intervened to efface its lustre from the countenance of Rosaura, where it mingled with an evident intelligence of mind and sweetness of disposition, with smiling youth, and elegance, and beauty.

"Ruvello," exclaimed the Count in the soundless accents of the busied imagination, "Ruvello, have you eyes, and can you take them from this aspect, to regard any other! Can you listen to the empty prattle of vanity and folly, when you might be charmed with the emanations of a soul like that of your Rosaura, whose lips open only to disseminate wisdom, and peace, and delight!"

Such was the ejaculation of Count Orvino; and it is not therefore wonderful that he should not pay any particular homage to the charms of the young and simple Virginia Alviano, who accompanied by her mother, an aunt of Ruvello, was in the evening party of Rosaura.

Signora Alviano, and even Ruvello himself,

himself, was extremely desirous to be allied to Orvino through the fair Virginia; and as she was now generally assured of encountering the intended lover in the society of Rosaura, the sage parent desired her to study to render herself pleasing to her new cousin."

"I would fain do so," replied Virginia innocently, "for she pleases me."

Signora Alviano made some reply, half articulated, which seemed to insinuate that it was not exactly so with her; yet she never suffered any symptom of dislike, or even of indifference, to escape her in the presence of her lovely niece; and Rosaura, unsuspecting of that hypocrisy in another, which could never approach her own heart, extremely reverenced Signora Alviano, and loved Virginia as her sister.

Rosaura meant to pass a part of the evening at the Opera where a favourite piece was to be performed, which she

hoped she might in some degree be suffered to listen to ; and Signora Alviano, with the most smiling complacency, expressed the same wish in behalf of Virginia and herself : but to the extreme chagrin of Rosaura, her box was soon crowded, and the whole party as talkative as usual.

Countess Almerini, who had immediately joined her, insisted that on quitting the Opera, Rosaura should accompany her to her habitation, because she expected the Marchioness Bernini to pass an hour with her ; and this lady was particularly desirous of meeting the celebrated Signora Ruvello.

The unfavourable insinuations of Orvino recurred to her at this moment with great force ; she cast a rapid glance over his aspect, and beheld him regarding her with an earnest gravity that seemed to request a negative to the proposition of the Countess. She rejected however, this mute appeal ; and conquering her

own strong reluctance, yielded to the importunities which the wishes of Ruvello would not allow her the power of silencing.

At this moment Ruvello himself entered the box of Signora Carrucci with that lady : it was immediately opposite to that of Rosaura, who fixing her eyes unconsciously upon them, could not repel a momentary reverie upon the absurd tyranny of custom.

“ And our lives must pass thus ! ” sighed she. “ The man who should be my guide and my adviser, must fly me ; and I must receive from others those attentions——”

Again her eyes turned to Orvino ; but instantly withdrawing them, her regards became fixed, and the scene around her was unobserved.

“ Did the Marquis mention to you this morning,” asked Countess Almerini, “ that the old Archbishop was in a way to recover ? ”

“ It is said that he is dead,” exclaimed another lady, without allowing Rosaura

time to reply, “and that he has bequeathed the principal part of his immense wealth to the Carthusian Convent.”

“What a cruel disappointment to the Marquis!” said Signora Alviano.

“It would be,” observed one of the attending Cavaliers; “but that I know the Archbishop was alive a few hours back, and the disposition of his property cannot possibly be known yet.”

Rosaura heard not a syllable of this discussion; and Orvino remarking her abstraction, and fearing that the evident coquetry of Signora Carucci and the sedulous attention she extorted from Ruvollo, might give occasion for reflections not of the most pleasing kind, ventured to interrupt them by addressing to her a remark upon the air which a performer was then singing.

“It is indeed a charming melody!” replied she: “so charming, that I should think it would almost irresistibly impel attention.”

“Signora

"Signora Ruvello," exclaimed one of the ladies of the party, "this dangerous malady of the Archbishop is one of the most horrid things I have ever heard of!"

"Is it of a nature so distressing?" asked Rosaura gravely.

"Oh Dio!" resumed the other, laughing; "I mean because it deprives you of an agreeable Cavaliere Servente for a few days."

"Oh, my charming cousin can well spare the attentions of the Marquis!" said Countess Almerini in a tone of peculiar import. "But what is the report of the day concerning the disgrace of the Prince and Princess Foscari?"

"It was an unfortunate game of billiards," replied a Cavalier: "the Prince intended as usual to lose it, and by some malicious trick of Fortune, he won it! Alas, poor Foscari! how little avail him now the many thousands he so dexterously

managed to give up to a superiority of skill!"

"Your interpretation then, of the cause of this disgrace, was not quite correct," said Rosaura, addressing Count Orvino with a smile.

"I am much indebted to your clemency," replied he with the same mien, "for detecting the error without displeasure. Many a poor Cavaliere Servente would have been dismissed for such an inaccuracy!—Who would not wish, like me, to be the satellite of a planet at once so mild and so bright!"

"Is that a line of Metestatio?" enquired Virginia earnestly.

"No," replied Countess Almerini, whose attentive ear had likewise caught the sound: "that effusion was extempore. The Count is suddenly become one of the *Improvisatori*!—and assuredly the Muse that inspires him, will reward his devotion by the admiration and applause she will be the means of exciting."

"What

"What can these insinuations mean?" thought Rosaura: "delivered too, with an air of such malicious meaning! Yet her petulance must be accidental—why should it discompose me? Perhaps it proceeds from some dislike to Count Orvino, who may have unintentionally offended her. I thought it yesterday!"

Simple Rosaura, what a conclusion hast thou drawn! Old Antonio or his old wife would have done the same! Your friend, the good, but rigid-featured Abbess too, would perhaps have been equally deceived: but all Naples could have corrected your error, and whispered in your ear that Countess Almerini loved Orvino but too well!

At the conclusion of the Opera, Rosaura and her party adjourned to the house of the Countess, and they were soon followed by several others, amongst whom was the Marchioness Bernini, whose impatience to be known to the lovely Signora Ruvello was then gratified.

Rosaura was scarcely released from the ceremonial of introduction, when the Countess presented to her Ernesto di Brandosi, the nephew of the Duke; and informed her that he solicited the honour of representing the absent Asavoli, for the time he was compelled to banish himself from her service.

"It would ill requite the condescension of Signor Ernesto," replied she, "to receive him as a mere substitute; and I must refuse the favour he proposes, that I may not deprive any other lady of an honour that must be deservedly appreciated."

"You refuse my attendance even for a few days," said the young man in a mortified tone: "surely I have been so unfortunate as to disgust you, Signora Ruvello, or a favour so limited would not be thus rejected!"

"You cannot think so," replied Rosaura with her usual sweetness of aspect: "a Cavalier of so much merit cannot disgust

disgust any one ; and I am equally certain that Signor Ernesto di Brandosi has too much courtesy to be displeased that I exercise the undoubted right I have of declining the honour he intended me, when I alledge a motive which cannot offend him."

"I am convinced," returned he in an animated tone, "that Signora Ruvello must ever be respected and admired, whatever mortification her decisions may inflict!"

Rosaura acknowledged the compliment by an inclination of the body, and passed on.

" Cannot you guess at the reason of a rigour so inflexible?" whispered Countess Almerini, as the eyes of Ernesto followed Rosaura. "Orvino is the barrier to your success ; she cherishes his attentions too sensibly to allow those of another to interrupt them, now that she believes herself at liberty to do so."

" Impossible!" exclaimed the young

man : " you are surely in an error. The candour of innocence, and the dignity of virtue are seated on her brow. I may be disappointed, Signora Contessa, but I cannot be malignant."

" However that may be," thought the Countess as she turned to some entering guests, " as you have a very tender esteem for this phenomenon, it is very possible that you may be a *little* jealous ; and I have no objection that she should be as strictly watched as occasion will admit."

Her conclusion was but too just ; for the regards of Ernesto followed Rosaura and Orvino with an attention the most earnest ; and, spite of his efforts to interpret without prejudice the looks of either, and to believe that the air of smiling complacency which he perceived, or fancied he perceived when the one addressed the other, was the mere effect of politeness ; yet the shaft was sped not to be recalled, and the poison was as sure as it was rapid.

Not

Not Ernesto di Brandosi alone, but Signora Alviano, the mother of Virginia, felt its influence. Her ear had been tainted by the same breath; and zealous attention to the interests of her daughter, had no other motive actuated her, would have rendered her vigilant and suspicious. Orvino was noble, Orvino was wealthy; he was the favourite associate of her nephew, and he had openly admired, and as openly commended the gentleness, the simplicity and sweetness of temper of Virginia: but on this fatal evening he saw her not—he appeared not to be sensible that she was present; her accents were not heard, for he beheld only Rosaura—he listened only to Rosaura!

“ Ill-boding to my child was that day,” exclaimed Signora Alviano, “ that conducted this woman to Naples! Ruvello too, he may likewise rue the fantasy that elevated her from the poverty in which her boasted race is sunk, to the height in which she now proudly towers, casting at humble distance

distance every one of that luckless family, upon whose wealth she revels!"

Rosaura, perfectly unconscious of the reflections to which she had given rise in the course of the evening, retired to her home at a late hour; and at a still later, her husband likewise entered it.

"And is it thus," repeated she, "that we must pass our insipid existence?"

This secret apostrophe was again renewed, when Ruvello seemed preparing to quit her the next morning.

"Remain for a few moments, I conjure you," exclaimed she with a sudden emotion: "spare me but half an hour of that society from which a custom strange and fantastic, so completely excludes me!"

Ruvello instantly returned.

"What would you, Rosaura?" demanded he.

"I would exist in a manner my reason does not condemn," returned she earnestly. "I would live to virtue to humanity,

humanity, to my husband, to my friends! Now, on the contrary, I find myself bound, an unwilling victim, to the altar of folly, and my soul sickens at her chains! Ruvello, must we always live at Naples? If you wish it, I will not murmur; but, Oh my friend! seek me out in this place, to which I am yet a stranger, associates whom I can esteem and love--let me listen to beings whom I can believe to be rational; and suffer my soul, which throbs to be endued with the knowledge that enlarges and purifies the mind--suffer it to imbibe the wisdom it reveres! Forgive me if my impetuosity have displeased you!" she added more timidly; "it was not my intention to be importunate, or to give you pain; but I could not just now restrain my feelings!"

Ruvello gazed at her a few moments in silence, as if he were weighing the sense of the words he had just heard, and then sunk into a reverie.

"Yes,

tionate air, and told him she would strengthen her patience with an expectation so pleasing.

CHAP. III.

SOON after Ruvello had left the house, Costanza informed her Lady that Maria, the daughter of the poor Lazzarone, was clothed, and was ready to take the post that might be assigned her in the household.

"I mean," replied Rosaura, "that she should be instructed to become a Cameriera; and as Colombina wishes to return to her family, let her go immediately if she

she chuse, and this girl may assist you to attend me."

This arrangement was evidently not approved of by Costanza, who objected to the awkwardness and stupidity which might naturally be expected from such an assistant: but Rosaura silenced her objections, and persevered in her plan. The girl at her command was conducted to her; and when she beheld her benefactress, she hastily threw herself at her feet, kissed them with humble gratitude, and bathed them with her tears.

"Rise," said Rosaura, much affected by her prostrate acknowledgment, and the strong emotion that accompanied it; "rise, Maria, and attend to me!"

The girl instantly obeyed.

"I wish you," resumed her Lady, "to become useful to yourself, to your family, and to society, and therefore I wish you to be diligent, attentive and industrious—obliging and submissive to those who instruct you in the offices you must now perform;

perform ; but you are likewise to understand that, in return for your good conduct, you are to expect kindness and consideration. Be not fearful of applying to me on any little emergency relating either to yourself or to your family, and continue to be dutiful to your parents, and affectionate to your brothers and sisters : for I would not disunite you ; I would, on the contrary, render you serviceable to them whilst you serve yourself, and more worthy of their love, by being willing that they should participate in any benefit, fortune may bestow upon your future exertions."

Again Maria fell at her feet.

" Ah, Signora," exclaimed she, " my heart is full—let me tell you what it feels ! When I think of your saving us all from famine, and death, and sorrow, I believe you must be the blessed Virgin herself!—and if this is impious, the blessed Virgin forgive me ! But she can hardly, sure, have been more good or more fair !"

" Calm

"Calm yourself," said Rosaura, "and reflect upon what you are uttering. You are grateful I find, but your thankfulness transports you beyond the bounds of reason! Retire now, Maria—Costanza will direct the disposition of your time; be industrious and good, and you will be happy!"

Maria promised implicit obedience to all her commands and injunctions, and then withdrew with the Cameriera, who had regarded the whole scene with more disdain and derision than she thought proper to display.

"I will now pass an hour with Signora Merchini," thought Rosaura: "her friendship and society I would still preserve, even though Ruvello persevered in the design, I fear upon reflection he will waver in the performance of. But where is this Orvino? Already is he weary of his office, and ranks it probably amidst the senseless ceremonials he detests.

"Be it so," added she, with a half sigh:
"he

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"he

"he shall not, however, by detaining me at home, give occasion to Signora Merchini to suspect that I have forgotten, or that I slight her obliging intimation!"

Whilst Rosaura was ordering her carriage, Count Orvino appeared; and, expressing some surprise on finding her alone at an hour when the world, or rather the crowd of idlers which thus distinguished itself, was quite in motion, seemed to forget that he had omitted any form of politeness which it was necessary to apologize for the neglect of.

"Probably," replied Rosaura smiling, "my usual associates expected that I should take the air this morning round the bay, accompanied by one Cavalier at least."

"I throw myself upon your well-known clemency," returned he, instantly comprehending the hint, "not only for the past, but for the future; and entreat you to imagine a power of sufficient force to detain me from your habitation, spite
of

of devoir and inclination ! Even now," he added, " this spell is upon me, and I hope you will not think me wilfully negligent of your convenience or your pleasure, when I have the mortification of declaring that business of the utmost importance must claim my attention for the remainder of this morning."

" I shall then," said Rosaura, " exhibit to Naples the extraordinary spectacle of a woman who is in rank above the vulgar, venturing to traverse a certain space between her own door and that of a friend, in a commodious carriage, with the protection only of a dozen attendants, but without a single Cavalier in her train : for the Marquis has sent me a billet, in which he is at an enormous expence of words, compliments, and protestations, to inform me that his uncle is dying, and that he cannot quit him without an indecorum that he fears I should not approve."

" You were rather precipitate then,"
said

said Orvino, “in rejecting the attendance of Ernesto di Brandosi!”

As the Count, in uttering this, appeared seriously to mean it, Rosaura felt rather piqued.

“I cannot repent that I did,” replied she, “because I could not presume to intend that your time and your avocations should be the sacrifice: and I am indeed weary of the restraint, the eternal sameness, and the form which this custom entails upon us! Do not however, publish my rusticity,” continued she, smiling; “but hasten to adjust your business, and leave me to my own discretion.”

“That may very safely be done,” replied the Count. “I wish I could say this of every lady in your circle!—Combined malevolence and indiscretion are dangerous indeed! Allow me, Signora Ruvello, to conduct you to your carriage, and to enquire if you see Signora Alviano this morning?”

“I believe

"I believe so," returned Rosaura: "but, Count Orvino, ere you leave me, explain I beseech you the sentence you have just uttered. Who is it that, combining malevolence with indiscretion——"

"Forgive the selfish impetuosity that extorted that sentence from my lips," interrupted he; "for I alone shall be a sufferer from the subject of that inadvertent complaint, which is not worthy of an enquiry from you. If you see Signora Alviano, I entreat you to inform her that I cannot immediately obtain the musical composition I mentioned to her daughter Virginia."

Rosaura assented, and they separated.

"Happy Virginia!" exclaimed Rosaura, as her carriage drove off, "such a husband, such a friend, such a companion does not fall to the lot of many women! Yet let me recollect by what means I have imbibed the exalted idea I entertain of the Count. The encomiums of Ruvello have been almost equally warm when he

has spoken of others who possessed very little merit—at least in my wayward opinion! And surely I have not witnessed enough of the conduct of Orvino, neither have his sentiments or principles been sufficiently unfolded to my observation, to authorize the partiality his appearance and his manners are but too well calculated to inspire!"

Rosaura determined to investigate this subject more amply at some future moment; and shortly after, her carriage stopped at the habitation of Signora Merchini, to whom she was instantly admitted. Though Rosaura found her alone, yet she suspected that Signor Merchini had retreated through one door as she entered the other, and was almost certain that she beheld his figure as he withdrew.

His hapless wife vainly endeavoured to conceal a dejection that was evidently occasioned by some recent circumstance; and her conversation was on the most general

general topics, and so guarded, that Rosaura actually believed the restless husband must be an unseen hearer of it.

This idea rendered her situation so irksome, that she was meditating to escape as quickly as possible, lest by some inadvertence she should afford him a subject for new displeasure, when a page who generally attended in the anti-chamber, entered with an elegant porcelain basket filled with superb fruit, on which lay a billet for Signora Merchini, who contemplated the whole with extreme dread ; and having opened the paper, was reading the lines it contained, when her husband suddenly entered. He compelled himself with some effort to address a few words to Rosaura ; and then casting an eye of angry suspicion upon the basket and its contents, he demanded from whom it came.

“ Signor Nascolo has taken the trouble to send this fruit,” replied she, almost trembling with affright.

"Will he not be here then this morning?" demanded Signor Merchini, endeavouring to assume an air of composure.

"Yes, I suppose so—I believe he would, but that I am indisposed, and cannot quit the house: and it would be unnecessary to allow Signor Nascolo to call at the door, only to be dismissed."

"But though you do not quit the house," said the husband impatiently, "you can receive him as a guest! Why except Signor Nascolo in particular?"

"Pardon this discussion," said Signora Merchini, turning to Rosaura; "it cannot interest you, and it should not therefore——"

"Signora Ruvello is all goodness," interrupted he; "but I will not trespass upon her complacency further than to remark that I cannot consent you should prohibit the attendance of Signor Nascolo this morning: your amiable friend will be delighted with his wit and vivacity. Suffer her therefore," added he with an insidious

insidious mien, “to participate in the pleasure his society generally inspires. This fruit appears very fine. Signora Ruvello, will you not condescend to avail yourself of the gallantry of this amiable Cavalier, and partake of his present?”

Rosaura, doubtful if she were expected to comply with this request or decline it, after a momentary hesitation assented ; and Signor Merchini affecting to point out to her the best of the fruit, found subsequent occasion to condemn each distinct piece ere she could receive it from him ; whilst his wife, finding the storm rising, motioned to the page to withdraw.

Signor Merchini then snatching the basket from the table on which it had been placed by the boy, turned over the fruit with contemptuous disgust, and protested his astonishment that Nascolo could send such trash.

“Where the devil could he have picked

up such juiceless, insipid, mellow masses of putridity!" exclaimed he, dashing the fruit into the basket in a rage.

"Nay, you jest!" said his hapless wife, blushing at his vehemence, and anxious to restore him to some degree of caution in the presence of Rosaura.

"I jest!" retorted he, his choler rising as he spoke. "Yes, most assuredly—yes, I jest!—every one must jest or falsify, who in the most remote manner ventures to assert that Signor Nascolo can be wrong, or even mistaken! In this, however, I do not jest, Madam, that his paltry present which you so highly estimate, shall not remain here to the disgrace of his liberality and of your judgment!"

These words were scarcely spoken, when the basket and its contents were dashed out of the window by the jealous husband; and a violent exclamation of anger and pain from a person who was appar-

apparently passing under it, indicated that some luckless head had interrupted their descent.

Signor Merchini appeared to recognise the voice. He started; and his vehemence instantly giving place to reflection, he cast upon his wife and her astonished guest, a look of intercession, and flew out of the room by the same door at which he had entered it.

"Unhappy man!" ejaculated Signora Merchini, sighing, "what excuse can I frame! Here is Signor Nascolo——"

Rosaura turning her eyes towards the antichamber, beheld this unfortunate Cavalier advancing from it, with his habit half covered with mashed fruit, interspersed with splinters of china; and his forehead exhibiting a very formidable wound, from which the blood was gushing.

"Signora Merchini," exclaimed he with a voice of indignant emotion, "have your caprices at length terminated to your

satisfaction? The whole tenor of your conduct gives me but too much reason to suppose that you must have been well aware I was entering the house, when you aimed this insult at me: but is it well imagined of a lady of your understanding, thus to requite attentions which resulted from respect and good-will!"

"Oh Dio!" ejaculated Signora Merchini, whose pale cheeks betrayed her agitation, "do you then suspect that I could indeed intend an insult and an injury of a nature so unworthy and even horrible! Heaven and my friend can witness that accident alone occasioned this regretted mischief! If I am disbelieved, listen at least to the testimony of Signora Ruvello!"

"By what *accident*," retorted he, "were the basket and the fruit thrown with a hand so violent from your window? If they did not merit the acceptance I solicited, at least they should not have been rejected with a contempt and indig-

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nation I cannot place to any reasonable account!"

"If your mind were not irritated by pain and misapprehension," returned she; "you might suppose that there existed a reason for an action apparently so offensive to the courtesy that did me honour."

"For the present, Signor," interrupted Rosaura, who wished to give her distressed companion time to form some excuse tolerably plausible, "you had better attend to the disaster, which I am certain Signora Merchini cannot behold without extreme pain, and resume the discussion at a moment of more composure."

"Pardon me," returned he; "I wish immediately to learn from the lips of Signora Merchini, that which I confess I cannot in the remotest degree guess at."

"I will satisfy you," returned she pensively. "The fruit was presented to Signora Ruvello, who had consented to do me the honour of partaking it, when a reptile reared its head, and darted at

me its venomous sting. Can you wonder if, in the agitation that ensued, the basket was cast away!"

"I cannot dispute your assertion, Signora," replied he, "strange though it may appear. You attest the fact, and I must believe it—at least, I thank you that you condescend to appease my mortified spirit with the relation of a circumstance which certainly gives a very different colour to this adventure. I congratulate you and Signora Ruvello upon the termination of it, and I am well pleased that it does not appear to reflect upon me the disgrace of an avowed insult from a lady I have been inclined to esteem."

The Cavalier then withdrew, and Signora Merchini, turning to Rosaura, raised her eyes to heaven, and burst into tears.

"The misery which I would have veiled from every eye," exclaimed she, "is now revealed to your's. My forbearance

bearance and my discretion are no longer put to a test they could scarcely sustain, when my sick heart demanded commiseration and sympathy : but I deplore the circumstance, because it will deprive me of the friend I had hoped to obtain !”

Rosaura was interrupting her, to declare that she esteemed and admired her much more warmly than when she entered the house, but Signora Merchini proceeded.

“ This unfortunate man—for he renders himself much more miserable than he can render me—you would shortly discover it, were I to be silent—he will detest you for having witnessed his weakness ; and nothing will convince him, I fear, that you would have the generous humanity to conceal it from the world. I see you here perhaps for the last time, and I shall not be permitted to seek you at your own habitation. Compassionate my lot, amiable Signora Ruvello, and endeavour if possible to vindicate my character from the contempt I am sensible it excites,

without casting that contempt upon another!"

Ere the sentence was entirely concluded, Signor Merchini reappeared with a brow of mingled shame, suspicion, and displeasure.

"Your conference appears to be a very confidential one," said he; "but I am compelled to interrupt it, to request that Signora Ruvello will judge leniently of the unfortunate sally of vehemence she may perhaps have thought singular. I was indeed very much ruffled by the loss of a sum of money rather considerable, which I had placed—in short, several perplexing affairs combined—but Signora Ruvello is perhaps impatient to be gone—the world will be seeking her as usual. Shall I have the honour of conducting you? You have dismissed your Cavalieri—perhaps your carriage is likewise dismissed?"

"No, Signor, it is at your gate," replied Rosaura very much disconcerted and

and provoked : “ suffer me however, to observe to you, ere I leave the house, that I can comprehend and allow for the many incidents that may sometimes occur to discompose the mind and the temper of every man : and I am sensible that it becomes every woman to be silent and discreet when any little domestic occurrence in the household of a friend may fall under her observation, which the malicious and ill-judging might perhaps misconstrue. I entreat you therefore to rely upon my assurance, that from this moment, the accident of this morning shall never more be mentioned or adverted to by me.”

“ This obliging condescension overpowers me,” replied he in great confusion. “ Did every woman resemble you, Signora, were others equally prudent, such scenes might not perhaps occur—Signor Ruvello is indeed a happy man !”

“ As a husband,” said Rosaura warmly, “ he is far from being equally so with yourself .

yourself! Pardon an officiousness that is well intended, and suffer me to direct your attention, since the modesty of Signora Merchini will not allow her to do it—let me direct your attention to the solicitude she displayed for your honour, your quiet, and her own character, which conjointly with her promptitude and judgment, rescued from the mind of Signor Nascolo——”

“ I heard her words, Madam,” interrupted he, his indignation again rising; “ they were indeed worthy of commendation.—‘ A reptile,’ she said, ‘ had reared its head, and pointed at her its venomous sting!—I—her husband—I was the reptile so designated! I am, no doubt, the—— Signora, you wish to depart: allow me the privilege of attending you, since you are alone. I am sorry my vehemence should have disturbed the delights of a meeting which I perceive was to have been unobserved, since you chose to come incognito! But you are probably

probably now in possession of a part of the subject that was to have been discussed, and I imagine——”

Rosaura interrupted him as with additional violence of gesture and accent he was proceeding.

“ Recollect yourself, Signor,” said she, restraining her displeasure and disgust for the sake of her friend, “ recollect yourself, and let not any sentence that may be uttered in the intemperance of an anger I know to be causeless, reach the ears of your domestics, who will not probably be induced to silence by the motives that govern me.”

Then turning to Signora Merchini who looked the image of sadness, she bade her adieu in a tone of affection and solicitude, and left the house, with a mind too much disturbed to allow her willingly to resort to any other than her own; and she was returning home, when the request of Orvino occurred to her, and with some reluc-

reluctance she drove to the habitation of Signora Alviano, where she was received with grave civility by the mother, and with an aspect of extreme disappointment by the daughter, who had hoped to have heard the Count announced instead of Rosaura: yet the cloud on her brow was soon dissipated, and she was recovering her serenity, when it again vanished on hearing the message of Orvino respecting the music.

"How mortifying this is!" exclaimed Virginia. "Formerly, Count Orvino never forgot or delayed any little service that he could do me; but now he is become your Cavaliere Servente, he thinks only of you!"

"Not in the present instance, however," returned Rosaura, endeavouring to smile at her *naïveté*; "for I have seen him only for a moment this day. He appears to be entirely occupied by affairs of importance, and thinks as little of the
singu-

singularity I am guilty of in flying about without a Cavalier, as he has done of this unfortunate Sonata."

"A singularity indeed!" exclaimed Signora Alviano: "some people I fear, would be censorious enough to call it an indecorum!—Pray is the poor Archbishop dead?"

"I have not heard for several hours back," returned Rosaura, surprised at the formality of the lady, who had not intended it however to appear. "The Marquis sent me a billet this morning, to say that he was supposed to be dying."

"Do you accompany our cousin Aline-rini to the conversazione at the Bernini Palace this evening?" resumed Signora Alviano with the same mien.

"I believe I must do so," replied Rosaura, "since the Countess has so earnestly pressed the matter: but I am apprehensive that I shall not find occasion to congratulate myself upon the acquisition of the society I shall find there."

"A woman

"A woman in the situation you now find yourself in," observed Signora Alviano, "pardon me, my dear niece, should yield up her own opinions to those of the world: the wife of Signor Ruvello should be seen in every circle of distinction."

"At least I will be careful, my dear aunt," said Rosaura with a mien that might have disarmed the malice of envy, "that the wife of Signor Ruvello shall not reflect discredit upon a kind and generous husband, in whatever circle she may be seen!"

"I must love you, though I am so much vexed!" exclaimed Virginia, throwing her arms round Rosaura, and kissing her cheek.

"And why should you be vexed, my amiable cousin?" returned she. "Not with me I hope! Yet you love me, you say; and I return your affection, Virginia, with all my heart—were you even my sister, I could not experience more interest in your welfare."

"I thank

"I thank you, my dear cousin," said Virginia: "and now tell me," added she hastily, "will not Count Orvino accompany you this evening?"

"Very possibly he may not," replied she.

"Should you not be very sorry?" demanded Virginia abruptly.

"No, my dear cousin: I am merely compelled by custom to admit of the attendance of Cavalieri Serventi, and therefore the occasional absence either of the Count or the Marquis D'Asavoli cannot give me pain. But I am mortified and chagrined that the usages of society will not allow me that of Signor Ruvollo."

"You love him then, better than Count Orvino?" asked Virginia, regarding her very earnestly.

"That is a strange enquiry," observed Signora Alviano, whose eyes were however fixed upon the aspect of Rosaura with considerable keenness of expression, and

and she felt her cheeks gain an additional colour from a scrutiny so minute.

"I should be both ungrateful and unprincipled," replied Rosaura, endeavouring to regain her usual composure, "could this admit of a doubt! *You* mean not to imply a censure, my good little cousin," added she with more dignity, "by the question you have so thoughtlessly advanced: but from the lips of any other person, it would offend me."

"You are much too childish, Virginia," said the mother, withdrawing her own inquisitive regards: "you should allow yourself a moment of reflection before you speak!"

"How often have I told you, my dear mother," replied she laughingly, "that I would do so, but that unhappily, when I begin to reflect, I forget what I wish to say; so that I must either speak without reflecting, or reflect without speaking."

"You are so amiable," said Rosaura, "that you may speak from the impulse of your

your heart, without previously scanning its sensations, and never create an enemy amongst the good and the worthy of either sex. Were the rest of the world only as honestly sincere, we should not daily behold so many concealed enemies, and so many avowed friends."

On hearing this sentence, Signora Alviano darted at Rosaura a sudden glance of surprise and enquiry : but perceiving that her aspect was undisturbed, and that what she uttered appeared to be a mere reflection, she instantly recovered herself, and the conversation became of a general import till they separated.

CHAP. IV.

IN the evening Count Orvino resumed his post of cicisbeo ; but as he approached Rosaura, the insinuations of Countess Almerini, and the more open discussion of Virginia, rushed to her recollection, and she received him with an embarrassment she could not immediately conquer.

The entrance of Countess Almerini attended by her Cavalieri, for a moment relieved her ; but this tormenting woman very soon began one of her malicious attacks, by enquiring by what strange accident Rosaura had been out all the morning entirely alone.

" How

"How could it enter into the imagination of Count Orvino to quit you for a moment, whilst the Marquis is so indispensably engaged?" continued she.
"Certainly nothing could be more ridiculously imagined of Ruvello, than to recommend him to you as a Cavaliere Servente: for as he has a vast deal of genius, and as you are a wonderful genius, it might have occurred to him that you would conduct yourselves like a pair of Tramontanes—*if nothing more serious should befall you!*" added she in a whisper.

Rosaura disgusted and shocked at a persecution so openly and indelicately pursued, made no immediate reply, but her indignant mien spoke her feelings: whilst Orvino regarding the Countess for a moment with steady contempt, observed that as Signora Ruvello had descended to allow his absence, he did not imagine that any other lady was privileged to condemn it.

"Assuredly

" Assuredly not," replied she: " but I wish her to condemn it, that all Naples may not condemn her as an innovator of established forms. Take my counsel, my fair cousin," continued she, " and dismiss this recreant!"

" Surely, Signora Contessa," said Rosaura gravely, " you cannot seriously mean that I should demonstrate to Count Orvino, whose attentions do me honour, a caprice so childishly inconsiderate, or that I should wish to impede the settlement of affairs that probably were important, if not indispensable."

One of the Cavaliers who attended the Countess, complimented Rosaura upon her extreme consideration; and she smilingly observed that the merit he pretended to discover in it, was an implied satire upon the ladies of Naples.

" Oh, we are ordinary mortals," returned the Countess; " *our* perfections are wholly terrestrial, and *our* minds of the usual construction: but Signora

Ruvello," she added, with an air half burlesque and half spiteful, and rising as she spoke, "Signora Ruvello is a being of celestial mould, with a soul elevated far above the highest standard of ordinary merit ; a goddess in fine, for whose presence the assembly of the Marchioness Bernini are now all earnestly wishing!"

"Your subject is much beneath the brilliancy of wit it has provoked," said Rosaura with unaffected composure : "I will now readily follow you ; for goddess or mortal, I should not chuse to be impertinently late in my appearance at the Bernini Palace."

The Countess affecting an air of pleasantry, passed on ; but Rosaura perceived that her temper was extremely discomposed, and that she herself appeared to be the object of its present irritation.

"What evil star presides over me?" thought she ; "how have I excited this vindictive displeasure?"

Orvino led her in silence to her carriage ;
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but when he had followed her into it, he remarked her abstraction, and after a moment of irresolute silence—

“ You are then,” said he, “ on the point of mixing with the society at the habitation of Marchioness Bernini ! Ruvello justly estimates your prudence ; but in urging your compliance with this wish of his, he forgets how cruelly he must martyrize that sensitive delicacy of soul which distinguishes Signora Ruvello from such women as Countess Almerini !”

“ Perhaps,” said Rosaura, “ Signor Ruvello may have some private reason for urging this wish, which it should be my duty implicitly to comply with : at least as I have complied, I should not allow myself to lessen the merit of a difficult obedience by a single murmur.”

“ You did not, I think, entirely reside with Signor Astolfo di Boschero and his Lady,” said Orvino after a short pause : “ I understand from Ruvello, that some distinguished and distinguishing mind confined

confined to the gloomy sameness of a cloister, though probably forgotten by the world, resolved to bestow upon it the most inestimable benefit, by cultivating the virtues and assisting to ripen the youthful judgment of Rosaura di Viralva."

Rosaura blushed, and the answer faltered on her tongue.

"Yes, Count Orvino," replied she, after a pause, "*I* had the inestimable benefit of possessing a friend, who imparted the virtues she wished to cultivate, and inspired the judgment she afterwards nurtured: and I beg of Heaven as the first of boons, that I may never disgrace her generous efforts!"

From this moment, Orvino was silent until they reached the Bernini Palace, and Rosaura had sunk into a thoughtfulness which only the stopping of the carriage interrupted.

The Marchioness received her in a manner that would have been highly flattering, had Rosaura either admired or

respected her; but as this was not the case, her excessive attentions merely oppressed her, whilst the presence of the Duke di Brandosi, who affected to regard her with haughty displeasure, and that of Ernesto, whose eyes followed Orvino and herself with an earnestness of attention that was distressing, gave her an embarrassment she could scarcely conceal. The rooms were likewise uncommonly crowded, and she experienced all the lassitude and fatigue a heated atmosphere occasions in a southern climate.

She heard on every side the most earnest discussions on the most trifling subjects, and she was compelled to join in them; but to her extreme dismay, she soon distinguished the names of Merchini and Nascolo, and the affair of the morning was related in various ways, and with so many burlesque incidents to give it a better zest, that it excited the utmost mirth in every unfeeling bosom.

Orvino heard the varied narrative with indig-

indignation, and Rosaura with an evident distress, which was excessively increased when some person mentioned that she was present, and entreated her to relate the fact as it really happened. She was instantly besieged by a hundred enquiries ; and as every one pressed round her to listen to the expected detail, the heat conspired with her agitation to overpower her, and she fainted.

When her senses returned, she found herself in a private apartment, where the lady of the mansion and Countess Almerini were assisting the women of the household to recover her.

Rosaura instantly expressed an earnest wish to be at home ; and though she was entreated as earnestly not to remove until she were more perfectly recovered, she persisted, and was indulged in her desire of having her carriage ordered. Orvino and Ernesto di Brandosi assisted her to it, and Countess Almerini accompanied her home : but having safely deposited the

fair invalid in her dressing-room, and delivered a thousand injunctions to her women, she called upon Orvino to re-conduct her to the assembly she had so complaisantly quitted.

He did not chuse to refuse obedience to this command, however insolent he might think it ; and Countess Almerini hastily paying the farewell compliments to Rosaura, then left her, attended by Orvino.

Rosaura almost immediately dismissed her women ; and taking up a book, endeavoured to amuse her mind with the ideas of another, rather than allow herself the indulgence of her own : but in less than half an hour she was interrupted by the entrance of Costanza, who announced a physician of eminence, who mentioned that he had been sent to her by the Countess Almerini.

“ Officious woman !” thought Rosaura ; “ how tormenting are the parading attentions that result from mere ceremony !”

She was compelled however, to admit
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the physician, who after an examination of her pulse, candidly acknowledged that his attendance was not necessary. Yet as she soon discovered that he was a man of sense, and as the world acknowledged that he was a man of literature, she entreated that he would oblige her by remaining to partake a refreshment she had ordered, and he very readily complied.

Rosaura was amused and delighted with the wit and ingenuity his observations displayed.

"What a strange world is this!" exclaimed she when he left her. "In Naples it is necessary to have a fainting fit, to obtain an hour or two of rational and unrestrained conversation with a man of genius, because a titled fool will not admit a physician to his house but to write a prescription!"

After a short interval of reflection, Rosaura again took up her book; and as she opened it, a written paper fell to the

ground, which she was very well assured could not have been between the leaves when she placed it upon the table. The physician had taken it up, and commented with great judgment upon the work ; but Rosaura could scarcely suppose he had taken the liberty, or the trouble, of giving her the intimation she read with so much agitation. The contents of the paper were to this effect.

“ The writer of this is inexpressibly grieved to disturb your repose ; but it is become absolutely necessary that you should learn ere it be too late, that Signor Ruvello does not pass all the hours of his absence from home and from you, with the lady to whom he is the Cavaliere Servente : some of those senseless hours are spent at a gaming-table. Recall him from this pernicious, this ruinous employment, exert all the influence you must possess,

possess, to snatch him from the destruction in which you must, alas ! be involved !”

Rosaura was thunderstruck.—“ Is it indeed so !” she ejaculated. “ But who thus awakens me to my future fate ? Surely Countess Almerini would have taken a less alarming method than this—a more open, a more certain mode of information ! Yet who but the Countess could have instructed this man, and she it seems sent him to me—it is very strange !”

The night appeared to her of endless length, and she passed it in the most perplexing suggestions. The sun had risen before Ruvello entered the house, and this repeated tardiness convinced her that the contents of the paper were but too true.

He had not heard of her indisposition of

the preceding evening, and the repeated enquiries that were delivered in, alone informed him of the circumstance.

He expressed much solicitude upon the subject, and Rosaura thought the occasion afforded her a proper opportunity of again hinting her wish to leave Naples.

"I believe," said she, "that the air of this place is not congenial to me; and I am on that account, rather more anxious to profit by your intention of removing to the Campagna."

"I will instantly put that intention into execution," returned he: "my affairs shall be immediately arranged, and ere a week passes over our heads, we will quit Naples."

Rosaura thanked him very earnestly, and he soon after left her, to commence these intended arrangements without a moment of delay.

"Until our departure," thought Rosaura, "I will remain at home on a plea
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of indisposition ; and endeavour to retain him with me at least some part of the evening. I shall then discover if the intelligence so strangely given, be true. A gamester I have heard, is restless and miserable if he be torn from his infatuated occupation. I must watch his aspect, I must—yet what can I effect ? I may intercede, I may insinuate a remonstrance, and I may supplicate—and what will all this avail ! Ruvello may for a moment yield to my prayers, my representations, and form resolutions, which if I have heard and read aright, will be broken as soon as formed !”

A servant had twice announced Count Orvino, and Rosaura heard it not; it was only when Orvino himself spoke, that she was recalled from her meditation.

"This intrusion is ill-timed, I perceive," said he. "Am I allowed to remain, or shall I withdraw?"

"By no means," replied Rosaura
F. G. hastily;

hastily ; “ I was wishing for your presence.”

“ I am much honoured by that avowal,” returned he ; “ suffer me to enquire if the indisposition I witnessed last evening, has wholly subsided.”

“ To you I will confess that it has,” she replied : “ but to general enquiries I make a different reply ; and to account for a falsity I am not pleased to have recourse to, I will tell you my motive. I have for some little time past importuned Signor Ruvello to quit this place for one of less dissipation, and he expresses a generous willingness to comply with my request. You, are I see, surprised that the splendour and gaiety of Naples should not captivate and charm me ; but in truth, I languish for the society of beings I can respect and esteem, and who are capable of friendship and affection : here I vainly turn my regards amidst the crowd that surrounds me, or if I discern in the group a heart with which mine claims kindred,

kindred, some fatality prevents the intercourse I wish for. At the semblance of good-will where the reality is wanting, my soul sickens, and I shrink in pain from the cruel sarcasms of those who wound in sportiveness, and deride the distress they occasion. Judge then, if here I have tasted of serenity or peace? I have not; and I would seek them where I believe they are to be found; and not for myself alone, but for Ruvello. I think he would likewise be better satisfied with his destiny: for what mode of existence can afford real and permanent satisfaction, unless it be sanctioned by reason! To hasten his resolves, and to spare myself further mortification in societies I dislike, I pretend some remains of indisposition; and to you I address myself, Count Orvino, as the approved friend of my husband, and to whose judgment he often appeals, to strengthen and to hasten the resolution he has adopted, if you do not think the

plan

plan inconsistent with his honour or his happiness."

Orvino did not immediately reply, and Rosaura was hurt at his silence and abstraction.

" You think me unreasonable," she resumed ; " you think probably that Ruvello ought not to be governed by what you may believe to be a caprice suggested by me—you imagine that with the rank he claims in society, and the fortune that supports it, the residence of the Court should be likewise his ! Believe me, Count, I wish not either to degrade or rusticate the man who has generously—"

" Forgive me," interrupted Orvino hastily, " that I suffered you for a moment to form so injurious an estimate of my sentiments ! Who could think you unreasonable—who, having once heard you, could suspect that any suggestion of yours could result from caprice ! Ah no—I see the wisdom of your plan, and every

every real friend of Ruvello must approve it—but you say, it has for some time occurred to you!—I am surprised that you should so instantly have discovered the necessity—the utility I would say—

“Yes, Signora Ruvello,” resumed he, after a short pause, “your remark is just: few, very few women in the societies you frequent, are entitled to challenge your approbation or win your friendship. With them the tie is formed without judgment, and dissolved without reason: it is a fantasy, a name—not a sensation of the soul resulting from esteem, from admiration, from that indefinable sense of unison which flatters equally the heart and the understanding—that approximation of opinion and sentiment which the habit of association may create, but which will likewise exist without any previous communication or intercourse of mind!”

Rosaura blushed deeply.

“Orvino was destined then,” thought she, “to be my friend!”

He was proceeding after another pause, to say that every aid he could give to her wishes she might command, when a servant presented a letter to Rosaura, of which a countryman, he said, was the bearer, and that it required immediate attention. She started on beholding the superscription, and hastily tearing it open, regardless of the presence of Orvino, read these lines.

" MY DEAR NIECE,

" You will assuredly participate in the distress of your poor uncle, and in that which overwhelms me, when I tell you that Pietro met us when we had nearly reached our home, with the afflicting intelligence that above half of our habitation, our gardens, and our vineyards rented by the neighbouring peasants, have been carried away by a violent deluge from the mountains. Alas, Rosaura ! we have exhausted our resources by our expe-

expedition to Naples, and unless your generous husband can assist us, we shall never more enjoy the competency of which this accident so cruel and so unexpected, deprives us.

" We are proceeding with the utmost expedition, to endeavour to save what may yet remain to us, and we dispatch Pietro on to you, in the hope that you will be enabled to send us some succour by him. He is, you know, trusty and careful.—Adieu, my beloved niece! I am your affectionate though afflicted aunt,

" RODEGONDA DI BOSCHERO."

Rosaura read this letter with extreme emotion ; and when she had concluded it, mused for some moments upon the possibility of immediately complying with the request it contained, without the participation of her husband.

Orvino who had watched her aspect, perceived

perceived her agitation, and that her mind was now balancing some consequent resolution.

"Can I assist you?" demanded he. "Will you command the services which it may be in my power to afford you? I wish not to limit them to the trifling offices of a Cavaliere Servente—in these I may possibly fail—but I would extend them to the more grateful offices which friendship solicits, and which friendship allows."

"I thank you most sincerely," replied Rosaura: "but in the present instance, I do not find that I can avail myself of the aid you kindly offer, or even of the advice I would otherwise demand; for I have but one path to pursue."

"I will not impede you in it," returned he: "since I cannot have the happiness of assisting you, I will withdraw."

Rosaura did not oppose his departure, and he left her; but hastily returned to the apartment ere he had quitted the house,

to enquire if she commanded his attendance in the evening.

Rosaura replied that she should neither leave her house, nor receive visitors.

"This evening then," returned he, "I will devote to the performance of a painful duty, since I cannot employ it in a pleasing one. Once more adieu, Signora Ruvello; allow me to say that the plan you have deigned to impart to me, shall receive every aid I can suggest or devise."

She remained after his departure for a few moments in an attitude of deep reflection, and then desired the bearer of the letter to be conducted to her.

Her order was obeyed, and Pietro entered the apartment with a thousand bows and rustic ceremonials, scarcely recognising in the fine Signora before him, encompassed with the decorations of luxury, the sprightly and condescending Rosaura di Viralva, whom the whole village, and every neighbouring peasant round

round her uncle's dwelling, had known and loved.

"I would welcome you with more pleasure, Pietro," said she, in the same sweet tones he so well remembered, "did you not bring me such unhappy tidings."

Pietro shook his head.

"Unhappy indeed, Signora!" replied he; "the whole valley has suffered cruelly—some of us more, some less: and nothing now is to be heard but moans and lamentations. At the Convent they distribute bread and soup, it is true, to those who have no other food to eat; but the good Nuns have suffered great losses likewise, and they can't do what their piety and charity would make them do in better times. Poor old Antonio——!"

"What of him?" demanded Rosaura eagerly.

"His cottage and all he had is swept away," replied Pietro; "and for two nights we could not persuade him to shelter

shelter himself in any other. As for his poor wife—Signora, she perished in the flood!"

Rosaura burst into tears, and several drops of sorrow likewise stole down the rugged cheeks of Pietro.

"When do you return?" asked she at length: "you must be weary, honest Pietro—retire now, and repose yourself."

"With your leave, Signora," replied he, "I would set out as soon as I receive your commands; for I cannot rest anywhere, away from my family just now, for fear the deluge should pour down again from the mountains, and carry them away. Oh Signora, it was horrible!—and only that Signor Astolfo ordered me on pain of his displeasure, I could not have had the heart to have come so far from them."

"Retire then," said Rosaura, "and take some refreshment, whilst I write some letters, and arrange a packet, which I will entrust to your fidelity and care."

She

She then ordered a domestic to attend particularly to the accommodation of Pietro, who left her to the accomplishment of her plans.

Rosaura instantly retired to her dressing-room, and collected all the money she possessed. The sum was not large; for the liberality of Ruvello had lately been checked, probably by his own losses at play; and the soul of his wife was not formed of the same materials that compose that of a miser; for her heart was compassionate, and her hand open. She likewise reviewed her jewels, which were very valuable, and so numerous that she never wore the whole of them at the same time. A part of these she intended to send to her uncle, to relieve the distress she so sensibly felt: but as she was dividing the ornaments into which they were composed, for this purpose, it occurred to her that Ruvello might perhaps experience more chagrin at this disposition of a brilliant superfluity, than he would feel from the

incon-

inconvenience of parting with a sum of money he had differently appropriated.

"I should perhaps apply to him as my aunt intimates," thought she: "yet how can I do so, when I suspect—when I am almost assured that he could not comply with her request without considerable embarrassment. I cannot therefore make an application so distressing to myself and to him, and still less can I suffer the benefactors of my youth to solicit in vain that assistance I can so easily bestow!"

She then proceeded in her employment; and having carefully packed almost the moiety of her jewels in a small compass, made a division of her money into three separate parcels, and wrote an affectionate reply to her aunt, to whom she stated the reasons that impelled her rather to send some part of the expensive ornaments already bestowed upon her, than to petition the further generosity of her husband.

" May

" May they," added Rosaura, " be found sufficient for the present emergency, and for the future I will study to suppress any imaginary or unreasonable want of my own, that I may not blush at a culpable inability to supply the real ones of those I am bound to revere and love!"

Rosaura next addressed a letter to the Abbess of the Convent mentioned by Pietro, which was the same in which so much of her life had been spent: it was dictated by reverence, gratitude, and affection; and towards the conclusion, she condoled with the worthy woman upon the affliction Heaven had thought proper to visit on the pious Sisterhood, and besought her to distribute to the poor sufferers of the valley, the sum that Pietro would be entrusted to deliver to her.

In little more than an hour every thing was arranged to her satisfaction; and she sent to desire the attendance of Pietro, who still persisting in his wish of returning, without

without losing an unnecessary moment, received from the hands of Rosaura the packet for her uncle and his wife, with an impressive injunction to be careful of the charge.

"These fifty crowns are for yourself and your family," said she.

Pietro fell on his knees, and kissed the hand extended to him.

"Rise, honest Pietro," added Rosaura, "and attend to me—and these fifty crowns are for poor old Antonio : tell him I will further recollect his wants and his age at every opportunity, and tell him I weep for his calamity ; but I entreat him to be comforted ! In this parcel addressed to the good Abbess, are a hundred crowns ; and here is a letter likewise for her, which you will deliver as soon as possible. And now farewell : be careful of yourself, and be careful of what I have confided to you ! How do you travel ?"

Pietro explained to her that he should take the opportunity of travelling with a Vetturino who was a friend of his, returning to a place within a league of the habitation of Signor Astolfo, and that he had informed him he should set out in a couple of hours. He then made his parting obeisance, accompanied with a very fervent benediction, and withdrew.

CHAP. V.

ROSAURA now debated with herself whether it would not be better immediately to inform Ruvello of the step she had taken, rather than defer the discovery to a future period.

" Yet if he should pursue this plan of retiring from Naples," she argued, " I shall seldom indeed find occasion to wear these expensive adornments, and Ruvello may then perhaps better reconcile himself to the disposition I have made of a part of them. If we remain here, he sees me so seldom that he will not observe their absence, and if I inform him that I have

them not, he will fancy perhaps that something is wanting in that style of decoration which he is so fond of: for the present then I will let the subject rest, and as incidents arise, so will I act."

Virginia Alviano was now announced to her, and was received by Rosaura with unfeigned pleasure.

"I understand that you have been ill, my dear cousin," said Virginia: "you fainted last night at the Bernini Palace, and my mother and I have only just now heard it, or she would have sent me sooner."

Rosaura assured her that her indisposition had much subsided, and that it had not by any means been serious.

"I hoped so at the time Countess Almerini mentioned it," replied the artless girl, "for she did not appear concerned: but she is so unfeeling that I could not be certain--and besides, I thought Count Orvino looked very grave. He came to us this morning with the music; but he remained

remained only ten minutes, and said that an affair of importance obliged him to hurry away. I should like to know what engages so much of his attention since his return from Sicily!"

"He engages a considerable portion of your attention, I perceive," said Rosaura smiling.

"Of my attention!" repeated Virginia, blushing: "why that should be I cannot tell; for I am sure I have no expectation of any thing happening which my cousin Ruvello speaks of! I rather think he should have been kind enough to have married me himself, and left you for Count Orvino: but no truly!—my cousin Ruvello praised me excessively, and was delighted with my disposition, which he said would just suit the notions of his friend: but when you came to Naples, he never reflected whether you would suit the notions of any other man—he thought only how he could secure you for himself! and I really think Count

Orvino would have done the same, had he seen you first!"

" My dear Virginia," said Rosaura after a momentary embarrassment, " you have more than once spoken to me of Count Orvino in a manner I am compelled to notice with seriousness: yet I understand that there is an idea entertained by your family, that should prevent those insinuations you allow yourself. You are chagrined perhaps, my amiable cousin, that he should have been recommended to me by my husband as a Cavaliere Servente, because you naturally believe that the ceremonious attentions he is compelled to employ in this absurd office, will occupy too large a portion of his time? Believe me, however, I will so regulate—"

" You are too good," interrupted Virginia, throwing herself into the arms of Rosaura: " I am a simpleton—I know not what has possessed me; but on the evening I met Count Orvino here, I saw how

how it was, and then it occurred to me that I should have been better matched with my cousin Ruvello, and you should have been Countess Orvino."

Rosaura blushed deeply, and again her embarrassment returned: but her changing aspect escaped the attention of her young companion, who after a pause of a few moments, enquired if she felt displeased.

"No, Virginia," replied she, "but you distress me! Your language, were it heard by the world, would perhaps extremely injure me, and give an impression of the character and conduct of Count Orvino which he is far from deserving. You should reflect, my sweet young friend, that the faith which a wife has promised at the altar, is of a very sacred and of a very extensive nature: neither her eye, her fancy, or a single thought should wander from him whom she has chosen, and from whom only death or infamy can divorce her! Think

of this, my dear Virginia, and then judge of the quietude you may unintentionally occasion me, who would wish not only to perform my duty with the strict approbation of my own heart, but would also feel even an undeserved censure on a point so delicate, very keenly."

"Forgive me," exclaimed Virginia, "I now perceive my error very clearly ! You have shewn it me without anger, but in a manner that makes me detest myself, whilst I love you still more—you have taken what I believe to have been envy from my bosom, and filled it with admiration ! Teach me to become as good as you are, or almost as good ; and then I shall be satisfied with myself, and be loved by every one but such women as Countess Almerini : she does not love you, my dear cousin, and I hate her for it !"

These words were scarcely uttered when Countess Almerini herself was announced : she was accompanied by Ernesto di

Brandosi, whom she presented to Rosaura as a Cavalier whose proffered services she had just accepted, that he might have an opportunity of alleviating his mortification for having been so inexorably rejected by her.

"I congratulate Signor Ernesto," said Rosaura, smiling, "that the consolation afforded him, so much exceeds the chagrin that called it forth."

The Countess nodded significantly; and Rosaura very much disliking the subject she had chosen, and the manner she had adopted, hastily led to another topic, which terminated in a request from her visitor, that she would not forget to appropriate an hour in the evening to the concert she was to give, in which, she said, an Ambassador's Lady was to be one of the performers.

"Pardon me;" replied Rosaura; "the indisposition I still feel, must excuse my absence."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Countess;

"it is a mockery to talk of indisposition with eyes so brilliant and a countenance so blooming. You will be half the attraction of the evening, and I cannot spare you: besides, have I not secured Signor Ernesto, if you should again faint, to break your fall, and assist Count Orvino in carrying you off, with the same grace they exhibited yesterday. I assure you the group was excessively admired!"

"Accept my acknowledgments, Signor Ernesto, for your humane assistance," said Rosaura; "I was not sensible that I was so much indebted to you. Countess Almerini will likewise condescend to receive my thanks for having obligingly sent me medical aid."

"No, upon my word," replied she; "I had not any idea that you required it, and I rather imagine you may range that little attention amidst those bestowed upon you either by my new Cavaliere or your own."

Without allowing Rosaura time to reply,
she

she then renewed her urgency for her presence in the evening, and persecuted her with alternate raillery and pique, until wearied with opposition, Rosaura unwillingly assented.

This point obtained, Countess Almerini rose to depart, having first mentioned to Virginia whom she had not before condescended to notice, that she should expect Signora Alviano and herself at an early hour. As she was quitting the room however, she recollect ed the affair which had occupied so much attention the preceding evening, and asked of Rosaura a history of Nascolo's disaster, who related it as Signora Merchini had represented it to Nascolo himself: the Countess professed herself unable to credit this representation, but having vainly pressed Rosaura to disclose the mystery, she at length departed.

A few minutes after, Rosaura received a very affectionate billet from Signora Alviano, which informed her that she

found herself unable, from being compelled to attend to business of importance, to accompany Virginia in the evening, and begged that her beloved niece would call at her house as she passed, and take charge of her young cousin.

To this request Rosaura assented with great alacrity.—“ But, my dear Virginia,” said she when the billet had been read aloud, “ you must not expect to see Count Orvino with me, for I had informed him of my intention not to quit my house, and he has appropriated the whole day to the arrangement of concerns that I believe to be of importance.”

“ If you had hinted this to Countess Almerini,” returned Virginia, “ you would have ended her importunities at once. I was well convinced all the time she was urging you, that it was the hope of Count Orvino’s presence and not your’s that obtained you so much solicitation !”

“ It is your own partiality, Virginia,” said Rosaura gravely, “ that gives you this

this false colouring of the sentiments of others : but I believe in this instance you mistake equally——”

“ No indeed,” interrupted she, “ not in this instance : I will submit to your decision in many others ; but every body knows that she tried every method she could invent to obtain him for a cicisbeo, and he repeatedly declined it. I have heard many people say it in the presence of my mother, who would have contradicted it, if it had not been true. I am very certain that the Count detests her, and I am sure I dislike her almost as much as he does. Countess Almerini does not love any woman who is young and handsome, so that she likes you less than any body—and I fear, my dear cousin, that she will pretend so much friendship for you, that she will at length gain your confidence, and employ it to your injury.”

“ Are these sentiments wholly your own ? ”

own?" demanded Rosaura, regarding her earnestly.

" I should not perhaps have thought all this," returned Virginia, " had not Count Orvino hinted something of the kind, and begged my mother to caution you upon the subject. My mother promised that she would, if she saw occasion; but yet she appeared unwilling to interfere, and I cannot help telling you what passed."

" You are indeed very amiable!" exclaimed Rosaura after a momentary thoughtfulness, " and I will endeavour to repay the interest you manifest for me, with the affection you can so well inspire. I think indeed with Ruvello, that with a heart so benevolent and good as your's, a temper so gentle, and manners at once so artless and engaging, you should belong to his friend Orvino."

" With such a conclusion," returned Virginia, " you confer a still greater
eulo-

eulogium upon him ! Do not be sorry for that, my dear cousin," she added, regarding Rosaura with a smiling air, "and be not displeased with me for making the remark : no one can avoid admiring him. But I will have done—only, I must say it was unfortunate for me, that my cousin Ruvello should put a notion into my head which I know is a very foolish one, and yet I cannot quite get rid of it ; and now you, even you, confirm my folly !"

This intimation struck Rosaura very forcibly, and she instantly saw the necessity of repressing the artless partiality of Virginia, until the sentiments of Count Orvino were decisively known.

At length after a visit of two hours, Virginia left her, and the mind of Rosaura then reverted to the melancholy communication of her aunt, and to the anonymous billet, which she now suspected to have been written by Orvino himself, since it was more than probable that he had occasioned

sioned the visit of the physician. His broken sentences crossed her recollection at the same moment.—“ He was surprised,” thought she, “ that I should so early have discovered the *necessity* of a removal from Naples! This affluence then,” added she, casting a glance round her, “ may be only imaginary—a moment may precipitate us from luxurious indulgences, to the single care of providing for the wants of nature, as they are contracted by poverty into the narrow compass of necessary food and covering ! I may soon learn to submit to this, because my former situation was not greatly removed from it; but how will Ruvello be resigned to the fate he prepares for himself?”

Ruvello, who generally dined at home, sent word that he was particularly engaged, and desired that she would not await him ; and Rosaura too much agitated by unpleasant reflections to take the meal unless compelled to it by a complimentary deference to another, merely refreshed herself

herself with some iced lemonade, and began the task of dressing for the evening.

With a reluctance unconquerable she decorated herself with such of her jewels as yet remained in her possession, and with almost equal unwillingness of soul, she entered her carriage at the proper hour, and drove to the house of Signora Alviano.

Those of her own rank who beheld her without a single Cavalier, uttered a thousand comments and conjectures upon a proceeding so extraordinary: and those men who had been disappointed in the design of distinguishing themselves as the cicisbei of the charming Signora Ruvello, pronounced her alternately an affected prude and a refined coquette, and even insinuated that this singularity of conduct could only result from a disposition to intrigue, which the attendance of a *Cavalier of honour* would disconcert. Her own sex, under pretext of softening the severity of such accusations, refined upon them

them with such a dexterity of animadversion, that in the space of half an hour Rosaura was tacitly loaded with almost every evil quality which the heart and the mind of a woman could be tainted with. She was graciously allowed however, a fine person and very harmonious features; but that captivating expression of aspect, and those prepossessing manners which the hasty opinions of some people had assigned her, were denied very strenuously. In fine, she was a very strange and tramontane creature, and certainly this whim of appearing everywhere without a Cavaliere Servente, was not easily to be accounted for, but in a manner very disadvantageous to her character, and to the honour of her husband.

Rosaura meantime, having returned the polite salutations of *her friends*, as they passed her in their way to the Corso, arrived at the house of Signora Alviano, unconscious of the comments she had excited, and found this lady occupied in looking

looking over papers and parchments with a Procuratore. She quitted the employment however, when Rosaura was announced, to receive her with even more than her accustomed consideration, nor did she betray even an involuntary disposition to remind her fair niece of the obscurity from which she had been raised.

Rosaura, who had intended to pass half an hour with her, finding that the Procuratore was detained, would not impede the business upon which he had been summoned; but as it was yet too early an hour for the society at the house of Countess Almerini, she determined to essay what she was almost hopeless of succeeding in, to gain admittance to Signora Merchini: but her apprehensions were just, for Signora Merchini was denied to her under a plea of illness, by a servant Rosaura had never before seen at the door, of an aspect at once morose and suspicious.

After

After a parley which he endeavoured to shorten, and to Rosaura prolong, a billet was given to one of her servants, from the house ; and Rosaura opening it, whilst she ordered her people to wait, read this sentence in a writing unlike that of her unfortunate friend.

“ Signora Merchini is now too much indisposed to receive visitors ; and when her convalescence is ascertained, she will leave Naples !”

“ Hapless Signora Merchini !” exclaimed she, “ too truly you foretold this capricious injustice ! I must then give up the hope of affording you the consolation I sigh to offer you, and equally give up the hope of finding in you the friend and adviser now become so necessary to me !”

With a pensive mien Rosaura returned to fulfil her engagement with Virginia, and they proceeded together to the habitation of Countess Almerini, who received Rosaura with an air so completely tinctured

tured with surprise and disappointment, that it well justified the assertion Virginia had advanced respecting Orvino.

"Signora Ruvello, how is this?" exclaimed the Countess: "again are you unattended! Has Count Orvino again flown to Sicily to nurse his sister, or has he likewise a rich uncle at the point of death?"

"Neither the one nor the other, I believe," replied Rosaura: "I intended you may remember, to have remained at home, and I did not advertise him of the alteration which you had effected in the disposition of my evening, because——"

"You should avoid this extreme inattention to our general habits," resumed the Countess in an accent of impatience; "or rather, I imagine, this entire defiance of them: it will create you many censors, and probably many enemies. The power of innovating a custom so established, requires more stable an auxiliary than the genius

genius that may perhaps be allowed to a youthful beauty, who is fond of acting with singularity!"

Rosaura was so much surprised by this unexpected severity of reprobation, that she paused for some time ere she could form any reply to it; and when at length she attempted to utter one, the Countess turned suddenly from her, to rejoin the party she had quitted.

Virginia expressed in a low voice, her indignation at the insolence she had heard, and adverted to the opinion she had herself so recently given.

"Your reception would have been very different," added she, "if you had been attended by the Count! I was indeed surprised that my mother did not remark his absence; but I believe she was so extremely interested in the business you found her engaged in, that her imagination was not to be detached from it a moment. What can the Countess and her set

set be so earnestly discussing?" continued Virginia. "How impertinently they regard us, my dear cousin!"

"They are discussing the absurdities of my character," replied Rosaura; "and I fear I have thoughtlessly given them a latitude they will not fail to take every advantage of!"

In a very few moments she was surrounded by enquiries upon her late indisposition, which were generally made with such tones of pathetic interest, that she could scarcely persuade herself she had not been at the point of death: yet a certain regard accompanied these tender enquiries, a certain equivocal demeanour, and so many earnest whispers, that Rosaura concluded half the assembly at least privately coincided with the Countess, whose haughty remonstrance and representation gave her an inquietude she could not overcome.

"No doubt," thought she, "I have many censors, and possibly I have enemies: but

but I have not rendered them so by the silly wish of innovating established customs, nor do I defy the slavery imposed by general habits. Why else am I now here, decked with a splendour my reason condemns as absurd, and mixing with a crowd of people who utter only the sly sarcasm of ill-nature, or that insipid adulation they neither expect nor desire the person to whom it is addressed, should be the dupe of!"

Ere the concert was concluded, Ernesto di Brandosi, who was conversing for a moment with Virginia, was spoken to by one of the domestics of the household, and he instantly left the apartment : when he returned to it, Rosaura herself remarked that he regarded her with looks of consternation and pity, and that he was endeavouring to approach her, with an earnest expression in his eye she could not mistake.

The contents of the anonymous billet instantly suggested themselves to her mind,

mind, and she believed that something horrible had happened : she had just forbearance enough however, to check her impetuous emotion, and deputed Virginia to make the enquiry she did not dare to advance herself.

"Entreat Signora Ruvello to withdraw as soon as possible," returned Ernesto : "her carriage will await her, and Count Orvino who will attend her, will explain the necessity of this request."

"Ruvello has ruined himself," thought she : "alas, poor Ruvello ! I must endeavour to console him!"

Rosaura would have questioned the young man further, but that he was compelled at this instant to attend a summons from Countess Almerini ; whilst Virginia, who could not divine what had happened, was in the utmost agitation until her companion could retire, who notwithstanding the emotions that almost overpowered her, awaited until she found an opportunity of doing so without discomposing the

assembly, which the disorder she had created the preceding evening would have rendered the more remarkable.

At length this opportunity so ardently desired, presented itself, and scarcely more perturbed than her young friend, Rosaura hastened to receive the promised explanation from the lips of Count Orvino.

He did not immediately present himself: but her carriage had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards, when the Count stopped it, and requested admittance. Rosaura now found her apprehensions increase to such a degree, that she was unable to utter a syllable, and it was the voice of Virginia which demanded in trembling accents what had happened.

"Ruvello has committed an imprudence," returned Orvino, "the consequences of which—— But let me conjure you," he added, regarding the countenance of Rosaura, to which the uncertain light in which he viewed it, gave a very pallid hue, "let me conjure you not to suffer

suffer an alarm greater than the occasion requires."

"Allow me then, fully to understand the occasion," said she: "Ruvello has been imprudent—he has perhaps reduced his patrimony, or he has annihilated it?"

"Not so," replied Orvino; "but he has allowed himself to be provoked beyond the limits of discretion, and has offended against our laws—he has been engaged in a duel!"

"Oh Heaven! he is wounded! Where is he, Count?—conduct me instantly to him!"

"Compose yourself I entreat you," said Orvino: "I assure you, on the word of a man of honour, that he is unhurt; but you cannot immediately see him. You know the severity of the law respecting this transgression of it. He is confined at the house of the *Giudice Criminale*; but every exertion which friendship can suggest or perform, shall be practised to soften his sentence—youself

must solicit the interest of those to whom your virtues are known, and by whom they must be admired! When Signora Ruvello pleads, who could reject the petition!"

Rosaura made a silent motion of dissent.

"Count Orvino is right," exclaimed the weeping Virginia: "it must be a hard heart that could refuse you, my dear cousin! I would every one loved you as I do—but be comforted!"

"Amiable girl!" said Rosaura, pressing her to her bosom. "Let me know," added she, turning to Orvino, "the whole possible extent of the misfortune that may await us—tell me, Count, if the sentence cannot be mitigated, what it then will be?"

"I fear," replied Orvino, "I much fear in that case—but it must, it will be mitigated."

"I believe I recollect," resumed she, "that for this offence—but, Count,
you

you tell me not of the situation of Ruvello's adversary. Oh God ! I can divine the fatal truth--he has deprived a fellow-being of life ! Alas, poor Ruvello ! how deep must be thy remorse!"

Orvino replied not, and she well interpreted his silence ; Virginia shuddered too, and clung to the arm of Rosaura, who sighed deeply ; and ere another sentence was uttered, the carriage stopped at the house of Signora Alviano.

Orvino advised that Rosaura should not enter it, but hasten home to secure any effects of value which could be removed without difficulty, before the seals of justice were placed upon them.

Virginia hearing this, bade her affectionately adieu, and said she would see her early in the morning.

" But perhaps," said Rosaura, detaining her, " Signora Alviano would advise and support me on this afflicting occasion ?"

"There is no time to be lost," returned Orvino: "let me conjure you not to await the result of such a request!"

Rosaura suspected from the manner in which this was uttered, that the Count had already made it in vain; and unwilling to wound Virginia by illustrating a doubt so painful, she gave her a parting embrace, and drove away.

Orvino scarcely awaited her enquiry ere he inveighed with bitterness against the cold-hearted hypocrisy of Signora Alviano; and Rosaura then learned that the Count had flown to her the moment the unhappy affair had reached his knowledge, in the fallacious hope that she would have personally countenanced and assisted her.

"I pity a woman," said Rosaura sighing, "who deprives herself of the respect and affection of such a daughter as Virginia!"

"And I detest a woman," exclaimed
Orvino

Orvino warmly, “whose soul is incapable of admiring and loving such a niece as Signora Ruvello.”

“I thank you, Count,” said Rosaura, after a momentary silence, “for the generous concern that impelled that sentence: a little reflection however, will convince you that it is as much too severe towards Signora Alviano, as it is too honourable for me. And now, have the kindness to inform me, if when you spoke of the seals of justice, you meant to infer that the possessions of my husband would be probably confiscated?”

“I fear they will,” replied he, “unless the intervention of powerful friends——”

“The other part of the penalty awaiting this unfortunate transaction,” interrupted she, “will be I suppose, banishment from these States for life?”

“Wherever you are—in whatever country you exist,” returned the Count, “the most exalted esteem, the highest consideration of every feeling heart——”

The carriage now stopped before the splendid dwelling of Ruvello, where every indication of tumult and disorder was visible at the first glance.

"We are too late!" ejaculated Orvino: "conceal, if possible, your jewels," he added, bending forward as if to make some enquiry of the servants, who flew to the side of the carriage in consternation and dismay: and whilst he affected to listen to their eager explanations, Rosaura tremblingly complied with his hasty injunction.

In a voice scarcely audible from agitation, she informed him that she had done so; and Orvino then silencing the clamours of the domestics, desired one of them to open the carriage door, and conducted her into the house, where she was met by Maria, who eagerly presented her the keys of her cabinet and dressing-room.

"I told them that the apartment was your own, my blessed Signora," said the poor girl, whose eyes were swelled with weeping,

weeping, “and then they let it alone: so I was determined nobody else should pillage it, unless they killed me to get the keys! Costanza and her favourite Cameriere took enough as it was; and like ungrateful wretches, as they are, to such a lady, they are gone away!”

Rosaura, affected by the contrast which the fidelity and attachment of Maria displayed, burst into tears; and Orvino commanding her conduct, took an opportunity of putting some gold into her hand as a further mark of his approbation, and recommended to her very earnestly to continue her vigilance in behalf of her Lady; which Maria, adverting to the charitable kindness of Rosaura to her family and herself, very strenuously promised.

“Enough, my good Maria, enough,” said Rosaura; “this proof of your attachment I can never forget: and should fate allow me the power at some future moment, I will reward it.”

Orvino now enquired of the girl if any of the male domestics had seconded her zeal.

"Yes," she replied, "Giovanno took my dear Lady's part, and said the keys should not be taken from me; and then it was that Costanza and the other went quietly away."

"Is he in the house?" demanded the Count.

"Oh yes, he did not want to go," replied the girl; "he only wants to know what my Lady would have him do."

Orvino dispatched her in search of Giovanno, and then intimated to Rosaura that as her own private effects were so well guarded, she would do right to withdraw to the house of Countess Almerini, or even endeavour to overlook the selfish apathy of Signora Alviano, so far as to make use of her habitation, until she could be properly protected in one of her own.

Rosaura felt her heart sicken at the proposition.

"Oh

"Oh no," exclaimed she, "I cannot submit to do either! I would be alone. Surely I shall be secured from any idea of insult or oppression; and whilst I am allowed the privilege of remaining here neglected indeed, but not compelled to wear an aspect with which my heart cannot correspond, I would avail myself of the indulgence. Have I then no hope of being admitted to converse a few moments with my unhappy husband?"

Orvino replied that it was impossible.

"And who," demanded she, clasping her hands in extreme emotion, "was the unfortunate adversary of Ruvello?"

"Signor Roberto di Venari," replied Orvino, giving the intelligence very unwillingly.

"Poor young man!" exclaimed she, the tears falling from her eyes. "Our fate then," she added, after a pause, "is inevitable: what will solicitation avail against the interest of that family? Unhappy Di Venari! would to Heaven thy

death did not rest on the head of Ruvello, and I would submit to the penalty which the crime entails, without a murmur!"

At this moment Maria returned with Giovanno; and his countenance evidenced the strength of his concern when he beheld Rosaura, who mentioned to him with the complacency natural to her, the intelligence she had received of his fidelity to her, and assured him that she was relieved from some part of her inquietude by the perfect reliance she could now place upon his zealous services, and those of Maria.

Orvino finding that Rosaura experienced an unconquerable reluctance to remove either to the house of Signora Alviano, or to that of Countess Almerini, left her at length, after having obtained permission to attend her at an early hour the next morning. Giovanno attended him out, and the liberality of the Count rewarded his attachment to the interests of his Lady, equally with that of Maria.

CHAP. VI.

ROSAURA passed a perturbed and restless night: the cruel indifference and neglect of Signora Alviano shocked her even more on reflection than at the moment they first reached her knowledge.

"Young and inexperienced as I am," exclaimed she, weeping, "without a friend or adviser near me of my own family, surely the aunt of Ruvello, to whom I have ever endeavoured to testify the respect and consideration I thought due to her, should not have withheld her counsel and protection at a moment so afflicting and so alarming! Perhaps I was

was imprudent in suffering myself to be persuaded to leave her door without a personal application ; yet if her heart had felt for me, what I hope mine would have experienced for any one in a situation so critical and embarrassing, would she have awaited an application ? Ah, surely not !— And what can I reasonably expect of attentive or consoling from Countess Almerini ? My former poverty is no doubt a crime in their eyes, and the transient splendour that could not give me a moment of happiness, has perhaps created me enemies, whose animosity even this reverse will not have the power of obliterating ! ”

The application which Orvino had said she must herself make in behalf of Ruvollo, shocked her.

“ For what must I solicit ! ” exclaimed she : “ that the career of justice may be stopped, and that an action criminal in itself, and fatal in its effects, may be overlooked by the legislation, that should punish

punish the individual to protect the community! A thousand times would I sooner abandon these forfeited possessions, and aid my hapless husband to support his existence by labour and industry!"

The day had not long dawned when Rosaura arose. As Costanza had so shamefully deserted her, she cheerfully accepted the offered assistance of Maria; and the girl felt proud and happy at a substitution that flattered her grateful heart.

After taking her solitary breakfast, Rosaura looked over the effects which it appeared she would be allowed to retain; and shortly after this task was concluded, Countess Almerini was announced, who was accompanied by Orvino and Ernesto di Brandosi.

She saluted Rosaura with more complacency than she had ever before thought proper to exhibit to her; and having lamented the impetuosity and imprudence of Ruvello—"And for what, think you," added

added she, “ did this absurd cousin of mine commit so fatal a folly ? ”

“ The cause has been variously reported,” interrupted Orvino hastily ; “ but the unfortunate dispute originated in a misconstrued sentence at a Cassino.”

The Countess took the hint with great docility, and then proceeded to say that it would be immediately necessary to secure all the interest that could be obtained, to render the sentence as lenient as possible.

“ You must accompany me,” added she, “ to the Marchioness Bernini this morning, for she has great influence with several people who can be extremely useful : we must then proceed to the Palace of the Princess di Parmeno, and induce her to conciliate the Duke di Brandesi, whom Signor Ernesto has already spoken to in behalf of Ruvello : but it seems that he still resents your rejection of him as a Cavaliere Servente. From thence we must fly to the Palace Miranda, and

and from thence to—*à-propos*—I understand that the Archbishop is recovering almost miraculously, so the Marquis must procure his interest with the Carthusians, who will of course speak in our favour to those whose consciences they have the direction of, and that will be a great point gained! In fine, we must not neglect any thing that may assist us, nor must we lose a moment in executing our projects. My carriage is waiting, and you must accompany me, my dear cousin, without delay."

The Countess then presented her hand to Orvino; but immediately affecting to withdraw it—"Pardon me," said she; "I mistook you for one of my Cavalieri!"

"The misapprehension could not but honour me," returned he with a forced air of gallantry.

"Since chance then, has so ordained it," resumed the Countess, "we will not counteract her influence: for this day at least,

least, you shall be my Cavalier; but that my fair cousin may not complain of the privation, I beg of Signor Ernesto to transfer the attentions he would have offered me, to her."

Orvino enraged at her assurance, yet compelled himself to submit with a good grace, and Signor Ernesto was not at all displeased with the caprice that placed him in so pleasant a situation.

Rosaura submitted with a heavy heart to the plans so volubly detailed by the Countess: she could not entertain any hope that they would be successful; and but for the interest and the peace of her husband, whose views she knew were not so easily limited as her own, she would have spared herself the mortification of soliciting the protection of a set of beings, from whose aid, if obtained, she would very reluctantly have held the affluence, or even the competency which each individual would thenceforward look upon as his own particular gift. Nor can this

this reluctance be stigmatized as the effect of little-minded pride, since every person of the least experience or the least intelligence, may perpetually observe that men will expect, will even claim as a privilege annexed to the title of protector, benefactor, or patron, the right of dictating the conduct, the opinions, and sentiments of their fellow-beings, whose judgment may probably be much superior to their own; and this merely because chance or local situation may have given them the power, and vanity the inclination, to promote some concern of interest or some effort of industry.

Whether this emotion of Rosaura's mind were censurable or otherwise however, it was not dissipated as she proceeded in the career of solicitation marked out by Countess Almerini: she imagined, and with great reason, that many an eye which was wont to court her notice, was now turned upon her with airs of condescension and superiority, that would merely have

have excited a smile, had her mind been at ease, or could she even have dismissed from it the idea that she was entreating the intervention of power to stay the course of justice. Her conscience perpetually instigated to her, that to deprive a fellow-creature of life in the fury of vengeance, or the rashness of passion, was dreadful; nor could the plea so often advanced, that the life of the successful combatant had been equally exposed, extenuate in her heart the horror of the homicide—since *homicide* it is called.

Depressed by these ideas, she appeared cold and abstracted where an abler petitioner would have employed the warmth and energy of pathetic declamation; and where the affected vivacity of assured success would have favourably decided the irresolution of those who always incline to a majority of opinions, Rosaura betrayed a weariness, a sinking of the soul, which was construed into the listlessness of despair.

Orvino

Orvino conjured her to rally her spirits, and wear, if possible, an air of serenity, if not of hope; and Ernesto di Brandosi seized every opportunity of protesting that he should think his fortune and his life but too happily lost in her service.

The Countess on her part, alternately dictated, chid, and advised; and it was with extreme satisfaction that Rosaura at length found herself permitted to return to her solitary dwelling.

Above two-thirds of the domestics had already left it, with whatever booty they could carry off in the confusion; but Giovanno and Maria still remained; and Rosaura experienced more consolation from their steady fidelity, than anger or grief at the unprincipled desertion of the rest.

From Giovanno she learned that the Marchese D'Asavoli had called twice at the door in her absence.

"This is fortunate!" exclaimed the Countess: "I mean that he should just at this moment find himself at liberty—the

the Marquis will be useful in many instances. And now," she added, "you must write the billet of solicitation, which Count Orvino will present."

"But poor Ruvello!" interrupted Rosaura. "Will you not, Count, first make an effort to be admitted to him? He must suffer severely."

"Rest assured," returned Orvino, "that every thing which may be permitted to a zealous friend to perform, shall be thought of to render his confinement supportable. More particularly in this instance I would avoid the reproaches of my own heart, and I would not merit your's. Ruvello is sufficiently to be pitied that he is withheld——"

"Enough, enough of compliment," interrupted Countess Almerini in a pettish accent: "this billet must be immediately written, Signora Ruvello; and you, Count, must then as immediately make your peace with the Marchioness Bernini, whom you have cruelly neglected lately, by carrying

carrying it yourself. After that, you may proceed to execute the instructions of my fair cousin. If Asavoli," added she, turning to Rosaura, "should present himself here again in the evening, detain him until I return to you. And now the billet!"

Rosaura complied with this reiterated advice, enforced indeed by an aspect of impatient command, and the Countess then quitted her, attended by the two Cavaliers.

When she was thus left to herself and to her reflections, she enquired of Giovanno, if Signora Alviano or her daughter Virginia had sent or called; and heard what indeed she expected, that they had not. Virginia, she was certain, must have been almost forcibly prevented, and Rosaura compassionated the uneasiness the poor girl must have felt at being compelled to appear so negligent and unfeeling.

"I must not, however," thought she,
"appear

" appear to slight Signora Alviano : she must be made acquainted with the detail of these operations in favour of her nephew, unavailing as I fear they will be ! The carriage I must not presume to use ; but I can write to ask her approbation of the measures already pursued, or her advice, if they appear to her injudicious or insufficient. The aunt of Ruvello is assuredly entitled to this information, and I will not withhold it, though she may cruelly withdraw from me her friendship and assistance."

In pursuance of this sentiment, Rossaura instantly wrote a succinct account of the transactions of the morning, and compelled herself to use the same style of affection and confidence which she would have adopted, if Signora Alviano had conducted herself with the compassionate attention her situation demanded.

Giovanno was entrusted with the letter, and in less than an hour he returned with the following answer.

" You

"You are perfectly right, Signora Ruvello, to use every exertion to preserve the affluence which no doubt you have found very pleasing and gratifying : but I should suppose your efforts, even directed and aided by the zealous assistance of Count Orvino, will scarcely be successful against such powerful interest as that of the Venari family. For my own part, I cannot certainly suggest any measure which your present advisers, provided they be only half as warm and vigilant as the Count, have not already pointed out to you.

"I think it right to mention however, that if my cousin Ruvello should retain his possessions, I shall certainly dispute with him the domains which he has hitherto enjoyed by the will of my uncle Alfonso di Ruvello, as I find he had no right to bequeath them from me and my heirs, on

whom they are entailed. Of this I have discovered very sufficient proof, and my Procuratore assures me, that in case of confiscation, Government will attend to my just claims, which are indeed too clear to be overlooked or denied.

"I am sorry that my affairs demand just now so much of my attention, that I cannot see and condole with you. Virginia I have this morning sent to the Convent where she was brought up, to resume her studies until I have more leisure to attend to her.

"Adieu, Signora Ruvello! I am with every due sentiment of respect,

"ELEONORA ALVIANO."

"This indeed, is beyond my expectation!" exclaimed Rosaura. "Barbarous woman! is this a moment to inform me of your claims! You even give me to suppose that you are urged by motives of interest

interest to wish the ruin of your nephew ! Unfortunate Virginia ! to be descended from a parent so sordid and unfeeling—and still more unfortunate, should she infuse into your candid bosom those principles so little analogous to its present bias ! Adieu then, to every hope of kindness or aid from Signora Alviano ! No doubt Count Orvino was well aware of the whole extent of that selfishness she has so well demonstrated to me—Oh ! how mistaken is she to suppose that the possession of an estate of the highest value, can compensate for the censure of one honourable mind !”

Had not Maria entered to remind her Lady that she had not dined, Rosaura would not probably have recollect ed the circumstance : she thanked the girl for her solicitude, and then discovered that as both the Major-domo and the cook had vanished, and the few domestics who remained were lackies and Camerieres, Maria herself, with some instruction and

assistance from Giovanno, had prepared a little repast to the best of her abilities, and had actually purchased the materials of which it was composed, with a part of the money given to her by Count Orvino.

Rosaura, who now for the first time reflected that she must furnish the means of existence for herself and her dependants, learned this instance of respectful affection by the enquiries she urged upon the subject.

A contrast, so remarkable, to the conduct of Signora Alviano, struck forcibly upon her heart; and turning suddenly from the food placed before her by grateful duty, she wept. To calm the inquietudes of her faithful domestics however, she compelled herself to do honour to the repast; and when it was concluded, she meditated on the immediate exigencies of her situation.

On reviewing her purse, which so lately she had almost emptied by a bounty she could not even now regret it appeared that

that thirty crowns formed the whole of its contents : but this circumstance occasioned her less inquietude than the diminution of her jewels, because she feared that the fund that might be raised from the sale of them, would be the sole resource of her husband, who would naturally experience both disappointment and anger that it fell so far short of his expectation : but the act was not to be recalled, unless indeed Ruvello should require her uncle to restore the money which no doubt he would immediately exchange them for ; and her heart bled at the idea only of the cruel distress to which this would subject him and his aged wife.

“ I must endeavour to supply this deficiency to Ruvello,” thought she, “ by the most zealous attention to his comfort and happiness, by repressing my own expences into the smallest compass, and by endeavouring, in whatever spot fate may place us, to obtain privately some

employment of fancy which may increase our little revenue. In the interim, what of those expensive luxuries which are more particularly my own, can I dispose of to obtain the money absolutely necessary to support Maria and Giovanno, and discharge the remainder of our domestics, who will I suppose in future be to us useless and improper!"

Whilst Rosaura was debating this point, the Marquis D'Asavoli sent to beg admittance; and she felt the necessity of receiving him with complacency, though she was inexpressibly distressed to be compelled to attend to mere forms, whilst her mind was in a state of confusion and anxiety, that rendered any abstraction from the subjects that most occupied it, painful and almost impossible.

The Marquis overwhelmed her with expressions of condolence, with offers of service, and sentences of regret at his late enforced absence: but Rosaura could not avoid remarking that the tenders of assistance

assistance he was so eager to make, had no decisive aim, and that they appeared to be the effect of compliment rather than of inclination.

"Should my friend Ruvello suffer for his indiscretion," continued the Marquis, "should he be banished the kingdom, at least, Signora, Naples must not feel the desolation of your loss. With the exertion of the interest you can command, a pension will be assigned you, and your merit will always procure you the attention of the world: but should it even be otherwise—which however is impossible, in me you will ever find the most attached and devoted of friends!"

"Signor Marchese," said Rosaura, who extremely disliked the tenor of this speech, "if my husband be banished from Naples, most assuredly I shall not remain in it; since wherever his destiny leads him, thither also will it lead me, who am equally by duty and inclination bound

to share his adverse fortunes, with the same affection that actuated him when he invited me to partake them, whilst they were splendid and unbroken."

" Ruvello would be unreasonable to expect this," returned he : " the most rigid of human beings would not think such a sacrifice necessary. Believe me, lovely Signora Ruvello——"

" Pardon me," interrupted Rosaura, rising as she spoke, " if I find myself in the necessity of entreating that you abridge this visit. I have many affairs to settle, many arrangements to make, and letters to write, which will occupy more time than I may perhaps be allowed, ere I am summoned to attend my exiled husband."

Say, rather," returned he in a vehement tone, " ere you are summoned by Orvino, for whom my assiduous attendance has been slighted, and my present wish to serve you rejected : from him you have not been so anxious to withdraw yourself,

yourself, since I find he has constantly attended you here and elsewhere, from the moment the arrest took place!"

"In my present desolate situation," said Rosaura, "this insult is cruel to excess! I had flattered myself with a hope that my conduct would have defied the censure even of the malicious, and I confess I did not expect to be wounded by a slanderous stigma from the Marquis D'Asavoli, whom I have heard characterized as a Nobleman of candour and humanity. The Count Orvino, as well as yourself, was presented to me by my husband as his intimate associate and favoured friend, and I received the civilities of each with the complacency which the most modest and correct of my sex may be allowed to experience in the society of men of honour and men of sense: but the preference to which you unjustly allude, I have reserved for Signor Ruvello alone! It is mortifying to a woman of any delicacy to be compelled to utter

protestations of rectitude which her own conduct and the discernment of mankind should render unnecessary. You have given me this mortification, Signor Marchese," added she, unable to restrain her tears, "and you can no longer expect that I should preserve for you that consideration, which to me you deny!"

"Forgive me!" exclaimed the Marquis, preventing her retreat; "pardon, I entreat you, the cbullition of a petulance I should not have allowed myself. For you I have the highest consideration, the highest esteem, the highest reverence! but I confess I dislike Orvino, and I could not calmly behold him on his return from Sicily, so immediately, so particularly distinguished by you, without envy and displeasure. If this sentiment displease you, I will endeavour to repress it: but to retain your empire over me, you must not withdraw that portion of your esteem which you say you have hitherto allowed me. Preserve in appearance

ance at least, that equality of regard which you profess, or I shall be tempted to make Orvino sensible that in the use of those weapons which a gentleman employs to avenge an injury he resents, he is not my superior."

"Is this a time," exclaimed Rosaura indignantly, "to torment me with threats, at which however I may shrink for a moment, I can teach myself to despise ! Would a generous man aggravate irremediable inquietude, and add to the dismay which ruin and proscription may be supposed to create in the breast of a woman, the superior anxiety and terror of leaving in the minds of former associates and friends, suspicions injurious to her honour ! Signor Marchese, quit me!"

"I have then rendered myself odious to you !" exclaimed he.

"Leave me, I entreat you !" repeated Rosaura.

"Obliterate this scene if possible, from your recollection," returned he, "and in

future I will endeavour to atone for having occasioned it. Pardon, I conjure you, most amiable of women, what has justly raised your displeasure, and by me it shall never again be excited ! I will now leave you, but you must not deprive me of the hope of being received to-morrow without disgust."

The Marquis withdrew without giving her time to refuse this request, and proceeded immediately to the habitation of Countess Almerini, whose sentiments he was well assured of, and who would not be averse he imagined, to assist him in estranging Rosaura from Count Orvino, since he found that his threats and the terror he had meant to inspire, had availed so little. To detain Rosaura in Naples, was a part of his plan, and to alarm her delicacy with regard to the propriety of still suffering the attendance of the Count, by perpetually uttering suspicions which would shock her ideas of decorum, was the first effort which that plan suggested, and

and of which the complete ruin of Ruvello was the foundation.

After his departure, Rosaura could not but reflect upon the unprotected situation in which she now found herself: her husband in confinement, his effects seized, and herself compelled to solicit the aid of people whose good opinion and consideration rise with the prosperity of those whom they call friends, who think the desertion of Fortune the indication of every crime, and her smile the stamp of perfection. She failed not to discover in the expressions and the regards of the men, a freedom of admiration which they had never before ventured to betray, a certain confidence which sensitive delicacy alone could discern, and which her situation as a petitioner must forbid her to repress with that resolution which could alone be effectual.

The features of the women, during her morning visitations, had expressed satisfaction

faction and triumph, and some few of them did not even trouble themselves to make any effort to conceal the exultation they so evidently felt ; whilst others avowed concern with an eye irradiated with joy, and in an accent of eager delight. Rosaura had remarked this, and now meditated with secret horror upon the malignity of the human mind, which will prompt a wretch to rejoice in the misery of a fellow-creature, though that misery brings to himself no fancied good or real pleasure, save a selfish exultation at his own more favourable destiny, and the nourishment of a dirty pride, produced by the reflection of superior pretensions to possess, and superior address in retaining those blessings which Heaven is supposed to sanction, since fate does not snatch them from his grasp.

CHAP. VII.

THE twilight of evening found Rosaura traversing with slow, yet agitated steps, one of the desolate apartments of her solitary mansion : her heart swelling with sadness, and her spirits sunk, not so much from the apprehension of poverty, or the regret resulting from the cloud that so suddenly darkened her prospects, as from the unhappy cause of this reverse, the incertitude she experienced for the future fate of Ruvello, and from the irksome solicitation and busy intriguing sort of protection she was urged to seek, from the voice and suffrages of people she disliked upon

upon principle, and shrank from with intuitive repugnance.

Several hours passed by, and she heard the equipages of the Nobles pass her gate in their way to those places and those parties she had so lately adorned : but her own seclusion from these could not awaken a single regret—alone, unsought, apparently forgotten, she remained some time at a latticed balcony, regarding the absurd parade and pomp of those who courted respect and admiration by a display of wealth and affluence which seldom perhaps really existed. The sober citizen, after the fatigue of a sultry day, would walk forth to enjoy the sea-breeze in the bay, or contemplate the serene and starry heavens from his house top, amidst the fragrance of the plants he had caused to be transported thither : but the numerous herd of Princes, Marquisses, Counts, and Cavaliers of every description, that throng the city, after eating in private their scanty and unsocial meals, rush forth to

the public gaze with almost the retinue of a Sovereign, and pass the nights in crowding to conversazioni at which no one can converse, at spectacles which no one wishes to see, at concerts no one will listen to ! And when the dawn of the coming day steals over the hemisphere, they are found at the pernicious gaming-table, dealing out ruin to others, or becoming themselves the victim of the fate they tempt.

To be interdicted from such scenes, could not be lamented by a rational being ; but the idea of perpetual banishment from the country where the exile first saw the light, where the faculties expanded, and where the gaiety of youth renders every object pleasing, is sad and afflictive ! Already Rosaura felt the yearning towards her native place, a banished wretch is ever tortured with ; and stretching her hands towards the open country which she beheld from her balcony, her eyes filled with tears, and she bade it farewell.

At

At this moment a carriage stopped at her portal—it was that of Countess Almérini; and dreading the scene she was now to encounter, Rosaura hastily prepared to receive her, by composing her aspect, and endeavouring to diffuse a cheerfulness over her features, very foreign to the present tone of her feelings.

The aspect of the Countess instantly announced that something had occurred to displease her: she was alone, and almost without any preface, thus addressed Rosaura.

“ Signora Ruvello, what can occasion a negligence so strange, and I may say so culpable on your part, to promote the interests of your husband?”

Rosaura regarding her with consternation and surprise, demanded an explanation of this reproach, which did not lose any of its force from a defect of severity in accent or manner.

“ Did I not entreat you,” resumed the Countess, “ to detain Asavoli until I could

could return hither? But far from complying with my request, you even take occasion to dismiss him dissatisfied and sullen! Is this a moment, Signora Ruvello, to act the disdainful and haughty beauty!—or is this a moment to estrange people of consequence by slights and disgusts, which evidently arise from the indulgence of a silly and imprudent partiality for a man, who has actually less influence and power than any other of his rank and pretensions in Naples!"

"I begged for an explanation of your charge, Countess Almerini," returned Rosaura; "but far from entirely satisfying me, you add to the accusation, others equally incomprehensible!"

"Perhaps you will understand me," replied she, "when I inform you that the Duke di Brandosi, Merchini, and several other people of high distinction, have refused their interest for Ruvello, and it is even supposed they employ it against him! Yet the intervention of

Asavoli

Asavoli alone, through the channel of the Archbishop, would still be almost sufficient to counteract them all, would you merely treat him with general complacency, to obtain it!"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Rosaura, "that Signor Merchini should be so inveterate!"

"Oh yes, very possible," replied she: "you witnessed a ridiculous scene, and he very naturally hates you for it. But I am in haste: let me however give you this intimation—Asavoli has I believe, some ancient pique against Orvino; and to gratify it, I am assured that he will do much--in fact, he will make such exertions in your behalf, provided you engage in return to dismiss the Count, that he thinks he may promise you a pension, which of course you will share with Ruvollo, of three or four thousand crowns."

"It is a mockery to talk to me of dismissing the Count!" exclaimed Rosaura: "the circumstances in which I find

find myself, will very soon exempt me from any trouble of that kind. In poverty and exile, I want not Cavalieri Serventi, and poverty and exile I plainly discern, are to be the fate of my unhappy husband. These I will freely and willingly share with him, instead of the pension proposed by the Marquis, as the price of a preconcerted act of insolence and injustice towards a man I still esteem, in spite of the odious insinuations to which my ears have lately been accustomed. And it is equally to merit the approbation of my own heart, and of such beings as Count Orvino, that I reject the suspicious services of the Marquis."

" You reject them ! " exclaimed the Countess—" you actually reject them ! And pray, my fair and foward cousin, allow me to ask, since you acknowledge that your ears have been accustomed to odious insinuations—who can have been accustomed to pour these issinuations into them ! Believe me neither the wonderful merit

merit of the Count, nor your philosophy, will be potent enough to stifle such insinuations when once they are heard, and you would much sooner obtain the approbation of men of honour and prudent women, were you to conduct yourself with less heroism and more circumspection ! To-morrow perhaps you will think better of the matter : until then, I leave you, that you may have leisure to reflect upon the hints I have given you."

The Countess then hastily quitted the room, leaving Rosaura indignant at her insolent persecution, yet distressed and terrified lest her malignancy should involve Count Orvino and the Marquis in some fatal contest. In vain did she repeatedly examine her own conduct, and revise that of Orvino from the hour in which Ruvello had first introduced him to her : she could not even recollect any instance of imprudence or incautiousness to justify the accusations that now openly met her ear ; yet they conspired with other subjects
of

of inquietude, to banish sleep from her eyes, and repose from her mind.

At an early hour in the morning, Giovanno informed his Lady that Count Orvino begged to see her.

“ He comes from Ruvello !” exclaimed she in extreme emotion.

Then hastening to him in all the tremor of anxious expectation, she was assailed by a new inquietude, on perceiving the expression of sadness his countenance betrayed, and her faltering tongue ejaculated an enquiry, in which the name only of Ruvello could be distinguished.

“ He wishes, and is allowed to see you,” replied the Count.

“ To see me ! Where—whither must I go ! Yet tell me first, tell me what has happened ?”

“ The sentence is already pronounced,” returned Orvino, perceiving that the alarm of Rosaura extended to some incident even more afflictive ; “ and the effort
which

which yesterday cost you so much to make, was a vain one!"

"And is this all?" demanded Rosaura.
"Is Ruvello composed, and is he—is he in health?"

"He is in health and tolerably composed: he grieves indeed that he should have involved you in his disgrace."

"Enough, Count: we shall be poor; but if we can endure poverty with patience, and court the content which is not always incompatible with it, we may still be happy. I thank Heaven that the hour of solicitation is past—but I will hasten to him. Where must I seek him?"

"He is still at the house of the *Giudice Criminale*; and he charged me to deliver you this billet, after having prepared you for the severity and promptitude with which his sentence is to be executed: I have ill performed my commission—forgive me that I offer not condolence or consolation: I have sufficient friendship for

for Ruvello, and respect for you, to want them myself!"

Rosaura took the billet in silence, and hastily casting her eye over it—

"A farewell!" she exclaimed. "Ah Heaven! he wishes me to remain, still to petition, to solicit, what I am convinced cannot be obtained—this is indeed bitter! But if he insist, I must obey. Excuse my absence for a few moments, Count—I will almost immediately return, and accompany you."

Orvino entreated her to consult her own convenience alone, and to believe him wholly devoted to her service and that of Ruvello.

Rosaura finding from the contents of the billet, that the ensuing interview with her husband, would be the only one allowed them ere he was hurried to the frontiers under an escort of soldiers, provided herself with the jewels that remained in her possession; and being conducted by Orvino to a carriage he had procured for the

purpose, soon found herself at the house where Ruvello was confined.

Here her emotions overpowered the fortitude she had hitherto preserved, and for several minutes she could scarcely be prevented from fainting: at length however, she shook off a weakness she condemned, and declared herself sufficiently prepared for the scene that awaited her.

Orvino supported her to the door of the apartment in which Ruvello was confined, and the sentinels who guarded it, admitted them both; but the Count withdrew when his unfortunate friend starting at their approach, flew to meet her.

"Oh Rosaura!" he exclaimed, "have I your forgiveness and your pity! May I hope——"

"Address me not in this strain," interrupted she; "equally with yourself I deplore the luckless event that has terminated so fatally: but I shrink not from the expiatory forfeiture the law enacts, neither I trust will you. You desired me

to

to come to you, that you might bid me adieu until I could follow you, if unsuccessful—or if happily otherwise, until you returned to Naples. Suffer me however, to entreat that you relinquish all expectation of lenity, or any amelioration of your sentence, for I am convinced we shall not meet with any. Let us not separate then, Ruvello—let me instantly accompany you and share your exile, which my faithful and sincere attachment may perhaps succeed in softening."

"Not if I behold you condemned to obscurity and banishment! No, Rosaura! I should then doubly curse the mad folly that reduced you to the misery I could not relieve! Were I to see the bloom of that beauty that now excites the admiration of the world, fading under the cold gripe of penury, I should then avenge the death of Venari by applying the same weapon to my own breast!"

Rosaura shuddered.

"Remain here," resumed he; "your

virtues, your merit, your loveliness will powerfully second the efforts of our friends, who will at least succeed in procuring you a pension that will fence you against actual poverty. Do not, I conjure you, oppose this plan which can alone give me the courage to support existence, by leaving me still an expectation, a hope, amidst the desolation and chaos that reign in my distracted mind. I could not survive the thought that I had rendered you an outcast and a wanderer: give me then the promise I demand, that you will remain here! Upon Orvino and the Marquis I can rely, both to support and protect you. My aunt Alviano is much attached to you——”

Rosaura sighed, but repressed the dissenting exclamation that hovered on her lips.

“ Perhaps,” he continued, “ she will receive you into her house. Countess Almerini too, admires and loves you: she has an indefinable sort of influence every where,

where, which will inevitably ensure you success, or at least it will much advance your interest. Consent then to remain, and I shall depart with some degree of serenity ; but if you extinguish every hope to which I yet cling, I know not how it will end !”

“ I have then no alternative !” replied she : “ I will—I must remain in Naples ; but it must be for a limited time only : if at the conclusion of a month, or two months, I cannot obtain what I am instructed to solicit, you will then allow me to rejoin you.”

“ The time you mention will not be sufficient to judge of the total inefficacy of our hopes,” replied he : “ in six months our destiny may possibly be decided, but not before. Orvino tells me that your personal effects have been respected, and that you have preserved your jewels. Upon some of these last,” he added sighing, “ you will contrive to exist whilst you remain here ; and if the efforts of our friends and your merit are unequal

to counteract in any degree the influence of the Venari family, the remainder will be a fund which may possibly ensure you a welcome with your uncle Di Boschero until I am no more; and then you may form a more propitious alliance than you have done with me."

"Why do you wound my soul by such suggestions as these!" exclaimed she, bursting into tears: "upon two conditions only will I consent to be severed from you for the term you have decreed—they are, that you take with you this portion of the expensive adornments your generous bounty bestowed upon me—I will not be refused—they are only the half of my jewels: take them therefore to supply your own necessities, and as a fund for youself. The other condition, in which I am equally peremptory, is that I am allowed to follow you in six months, or sooner: for I will not hear of a further separation. Wherever you may then be, I will rejoin you!"

For a considerable time Ruvello contested

tested both these propositions with obstinacy; but Rosaura at length prevailed, because she refused to remain an hour in Naples, after he had left it, unless he assented in both instances. Then perceiving that her presence, and even her kindness aggravated his regrets, and called forth his self-reproaches for the mad imprudence that involved her in his ruin, she bade him a tender adieu; and charging him to write frequently, and never to neglect informing her of his change of residence, whenever it took place, she adverted to their reunion in six months, whatever Fortune might in the interim ordain for them, and withdrew.

Orvino rejoined her in the antichamber, and conducted her in silence to the carriage, which he again entered with her; and when they had proceeded a few streets, Rosaura endeavouring to shake off the extreme depression of her spirits, raised her head from the hand that had supported it, and perceiving for the first time that she was not in a direction to approach

the late dwelling of Ruvello, she remarked to the Count that the driver was in an error.

"Pardon me that I did not sooner inform you," replied Orvino, who until that moment had been in a reverie as profound as her own, "that your immediate removal from the habitation you have hitherto occupied, will spare you a scene ill calculated to sooth your grief: and finding myself authorized by the instructions of Ruvello, I have ventured without consulting you, to seek out a temporary dwelling, which you may instantly take possession of, and to which, should you not disapprove of it, your domestics will remove your effects."

"I am sensible of your generous attention to my welfare and convenience," replied Rosaura: "but just now—at this moment—I cannot speak my sense of it as I wish."

"This is the house," interrupted Orvino; pointing at the same time to a habi-

habitation neat in its appearance, but not splendid : it announced opulence without luxury, and its decorations, though modest, bespoke taste and refinement.

"The merchant Anselmo who dwells here," added Orvino, "will think his abode honoured if you condescend to enter it, and his sister will be happy to attend to your accommodation."

"The merchant Anselmo!" repeated Rosaura. "Ah Count, I can comprehend that benevolence alone could induce a man so much in favour with fortune——"

"He advances to receive you," said Orvino, saluting an old man who stepped from the portico of the mansion, and bowed to Rosaura with profound respect.

When she had been conducted into the house—

"Allow me, Signora," said the merchant, "to avow my gratitude for the honour you confer upon me in accepting apartments under my humble roof: to Count Orvino my thanks are likewise due

for recommending me to so illustrious a guest, and I will study to deserve this mark of favour, by rendering the abode I hope Signora Ruvello will make here, as convenient as possible."

Rosaura well aware that the merchant Anselmo was one of the richest citizens in Naples, knew not what to reply : that he should let any part of his house for hire, appeared very improbable, yet in what other light could she interpret what was passing.

The old man perceiving her embarrassment, desired one of his domestics to call his sister Beatrice, that she might immediately offer her devoirs to Signora Ruvello, and in the interim he himself performed the office of a gentleman usher with every mark of humility and reverence.

Beatrice instantly attended the summons she had received ; and Rosaura beheld in her, a little simple looking old woman, who having testified her respect by repeated courtesies, thanked her for the honour

honour conferred upon her brother and herself; and at the intimation of Signor Anselmo, she then offered to conduct Rosaura to the apartments destined for her use, whither he likewise chose to attend her, because he was extremely unwilling to confide to the discretion or intelligence of his sister.

Rosaura could not but approve of these apartments, which would indeed have appeared to her much too splendid for her present situation, had she not reflected that it was necessary to present a decent exterior to the eye of the world; and had not the profuse and costly decorations of her late residence rendered that of Anselmo comparatively plain and moderate.

In reply to the enquiry of the merchant if any thing in the apartments materially displeased or disgusted her, she informed him that she extremely approved them, and was proceeding to enquire at what sum they were to let, when he interrupted her to beg that she would without

hesitation order any little alteration or amendment she thought proper, and concluded with saying that from that moment he should consider her as his inmate.

He then hastily withdrew, followed by Signora Beatrice ; and a few moments after they had left the room, ere Rosaura could so far rouse her faculties as to reflect upon the singularity of his hasty arrangement, Count Orvino entered, and interrupted a reverie into which she had sunk, by enquiring if she would allow him to direct her servants to convey her effects to her new residence.

" Consider me," added he, " as the delegate of Ruvello, for such I am. Every thing is already arranged between him and Signor Anselmo for your accommodation ; and I am to inform you, as perhaps in the sad moment of separation Ruvello might forget it, that Signor Anselmo is appointed by him to be your banker until his return to Naples, or until you rejoin him."

" Too

"Too generous Orvino, this must not be," thought she : "but with Signor Anselmo himself, I must discuss this !

" You talk of his return to Naples," said she, addressing the Count ; " and I am, alas ! but too sensible that he goes hence never to return—he is an exile for life ! Would to Heaven he could be persuaded to suffer me to accompany him, that whilst sharing his obscurity and his fate, whatever it may be, I might render it less terrible to him by my zealous cares. Even yet perhaps, your influence with him, Count Orvino, your persuasions——"

" Shall I own to you," interrupted he, " that I have already vainly essayed the power I once flattered myself I had over his mind, to induce him to accede to this wish of yours, ere I knew you had formed it ; because I believed, I felt convinced that your presence or your absence from him would colour his destiny : I imagined too, I plainly saw, that solicitation was irksome to you, and that your residence

in Naples would doom you to evils that might be avoided. I feared likewise, that with merit so superior as that which distinguishes Signora Ruvello, the envy of little minds, delighted to behold it unshielded by the protection that may have hitherto restrained their rancorous shafts, would now be unbridled, and let loose to wound where alone you are vulnerable."

The insinuations of Asavoli, and those of Countess Almerini instantly arose to her recollection, and combined with this sentence of Orvino to give her a shock almost too powerful for her endurance, and her voice failing her, it was by her aspect alone that she required an explanation.

"I allude to the candour of innocence," added he, "which never suffers the heart it inhabits to suspect that of another, combined with the timid inexperience of youth, and the dangerous effects of a beauty too conspicuously pre-eminent! Yet urged thus by apprehensions for your peace, and by anxiety for
the

the fate of Ruvello, to plead and represent with a warmth I almost feared he would resent, I was still unsuccessful. Then it was that I recollectcd the residence of Signor Anselmo, and thought—and hoped, it would not displease you. I am charmed to find that I did not err, and ere long you will, I am persuaded, descend to regard the old merchant with esteem and friendship. To Signora Ruvello, who is above the absurd prejudices of pride and folly, and whose soul is yet nobler than her birth, I may venture to say this."

"Signor Anselmo is *your* friend, I believe," said Rosaura.

"He is the friend of mankind," returned Orvino warmly; "and though a plebeian, he has an elevation of soul that would dignify a Prince!"

"To you then I shall be indebted still more than I even imagined," returned she. "For your intercession with my unhappy Ruvello that I should quit a

place

place I never loved, and which now I still more dislike, receive my warmest thanks : and for this last benefit—had Nature given me a brother,” added she, her eyes filling with tears as she spoke, “ could he have acted towards his orphan sister with more kindness than Count Orvino has done!—The brother then that Nature has denied, my chequered fortune gives me !”

“ The appellation with which you honour me, I will study to deserve,” said Orvino, hastily retreating. “ I may then inform your servants, Signora Ruvello, that you require their attendance here ?”

Rosaura answered in the affirmative, and he instantly vanished.

CHAP. VIII.

A FEW moments after the departure of Orvino, Madame Beatrice introduced herself, to entreat that she would allow the attendance of her brother's servants until her own should arrive: and Rosaura having assured her that she had not any immediate occasion to employ them, detained this good woman, who appeared equally silly, well meaning, and communicative.

Signora Beatrice having expressed her regrets at the unhappy event which drove Ruvello into banishment, expatiated however upon his good fortune in possessing such a friend as Count Orvino, who was,

she

she said, the best and most condescending young Nobleman in all Naples, and as sociable with her brother as though he were a Cavalier instead of a merchant; which was the more extraordinary, as he never wanted to borrow his money : whilst every other of the Nobles who came to the house for loans they could not do without, treated every body in it with the utmost contempt and insolence.

Rosaura enquired how the friendship of Signor Anselmo and Count Orvino had commenced ; but Beatrice could only inform her that some accidental circumstance had introduced them to each other, and that her brother always professed himself much indebted to his noble young friend.

At length the good woman withdrew with her usual ceremonials, and Rosaura then found time to reflect upon her change of situation.

“ Yet I cannot remain here,” exclaimed she, “ except it be at the expence of the Count,

Count, and that I could not endure ! No, Orvino, as you have yourself said, those calumnious shafts which unbridled malice may now securely aim at me, I must guard against ; and it is the envy which your merit and your compassionate attentions will attract to me, I shall find most dangerous and inveterate. I must therefore repress them—I must repel that noble benevolence which would excite in my heart a gratitude too powerful ; and in those of others, a malevolence that might blight my fame for ever ! Orvino I must endeavour to shun, whilst I still receive the visits of the detested Asavoli, or *he* will, equally with the Countess Almerini, cruelly avenge my repugnance and dislike ! ”

Rosaura now recollect ed that she ought instantly to inform the Countess of her change of residence, and for this purpose she awaited with some impatience the appearance of Giovanno or Maria, who in less than two hours after the departure
of

of Orvino, rejoined their Lady ; and they were followed by several Lazzaroni loaded with her effects.

Giovanno was instantly dispatched with a billet to Countess Almerini ; and Rosaura was then informed by Maria, who was overjoyed to see her again, that Signor Ruvello had commissioned the good Count to discharge all the domestics excepting her own woman, Giovanno, Pietro, and herself.

" But you know, Signora Padrona," added Maria, " that Costanza ran away, like an ungrateful wretch as she was ! And Pietro has been as bad, for he went this morning to serve Signora Alviano, who sent to him to go to her ; so there was only Giovanno and me to come, and the Count says you must be pleased to hire others, to perform the services of Pietro and Costanza."

" Nó, Maria," replied she, " I will be contented with your faithful services and those of Giovanno : my present fortunes

do

do not authorize me to retain him, or even yourself; but it must be so!"

"Signora Illustrissima, I will be as diligent as a girl can be," returned Maria, "and serve you night and day, to try to make up in that way for my ignorance!"

"Your fidelity and gratitude more than counterbalance your want of expertness," said Rosaura; "I will ever consider your conduct as I ought, but I grieve that I cannot now assist you as I had hoped to have done; yet what little assistance and instruction I can afford you, you may rely upon receiving."

Maria expressed the most extravagant delight that she was to be retained by her beloved Lady, and repeated her assurances of a diligence and zeal that should know no bounds.

She then employed herself in arranging a part of the baggage, and Rosaura awaited with some anxiety the return of Giovanno, who would be too late, she feared, to prevent Countess Almerini from making a useless

a useless effort to see her at her late habitation, which in the present irritable state of this lady's temper, might occasion her a very harsh reprimand.

Giovanno returned however, without success; for Countess Almerini was not at home, and he had left the billet to be given to her: but whilst he was relating this to Rosaura, the Countess herself entered, with an aspect of friendship and good humour.

When Giovanno had left the room, she informed Rosaura that she had learned her removal from Count Orvino, from whom she had just parted.

"He has been execrating to me the abominable conduct of Signora Alviano," added she, "and you may suppose I was far from defending it: I soon discovered that there was no necessity to intimate to him the reason that principally urges her malice, for he is well aware that it does not proceed from avarice alone, but from
the

the disappointment of a favourite expectation which she charges to you : she had actually the folly to hope, to suppose it possible, that Orvino would marry her silly daughter ! The insolent presumption of some women is really intolerable ! and now she runs about proclaiming that you have seduced the Count from Virginia, and the foolish girl is, I hear, breaking her heart. I represented all this to Orvino"—(Rosaura evinced the shock she experienced, by a sudden start, and an aspect of distress)—“and he agreed with me in the opinion I expressed, that some people will be wicked enough, and others weak enough to believe her, unless he absents himself from you for some time : he means therefore to follow Ruvello to Rome in a day or two, and endeavour to procure his admittance into the ecclesiastical service, or into that of the Duke of Tuscany ; and then if you fail here, which a few weeks

weeks will determine, when you rejoin your husband, Orvino will prudently return to Naples. And now, my fair cousin, you must give me a solemn promise to act as if you had not heard a word of all this; for I protested to the Count that I would not suffer a hint of it to escape me, lest it should alarm and distress the delicacy of soul he so much admires; but at the same time, I thought it absolutely necessary that you should understand the peculiar situation you are in, that you may be extremely circumspect, and even prudish. In short, you must make an offering to the world of that homage which does not probably displease you."

"I shall be indeed, extremely reluctant to receive from any Cavalier," replied Rosaura, "that mock homage which the world itself chuses to impose upon me; since other women may have pretensions to the heart of the Marquis D'Asavoli, or any one who thinks proper to call himself
my

my cicisbeo, and to satisfy a fantasy or a jealous pique, may torment and injure me in the same way!"

"Nay, if you are thus warm and susceptible on the subject," said the Countess, "I shall really think my cousin Alviano is not quite mistaken in some of her conjectures! Calm yourself, Signora Ruvollo——"

"I am perfectly calm!" said Rosaura gravely.

"——Calm yourself I beg, and descend to attend to the advice of the only friend your fate has left you!"

"The only friend!" repeated Rosaura dejectedly. "Well then, give me your counsel, and let it be indeed that of a friend—let me feel it to be such. And Oh, Countess Almerini! give me likewise to experience the consolation and kindness a friend delights to bestow!"

As Rosaura uttered the last words, she could not restrain her tears; but far from compassionating or soothing her distress,

the merciless woman still proceeded in the same strain.

“ And why this passionate fit of weeping ?” demanded she : “ surely your soul, superior as I have often heard it represented to be, is easily dejected by a stroke of fortune, which a philosopher even of our sex should be totally unmoved at ! for certainly there is no other cause—you cannot thus despond because it becomes necessary to refuse yourself the society of the Count !”

“ Surely,” exclaimed Rosaura, “ this can neither be counsel nor consolation ! My fate is bitter indeed !”

“ Why so ?” demanded Countess Almerini : “ whilst you consult the delicacy of your own character, and the honour of your husband, you may command my utmost efforts to serve you. And there is my friend Marchioness Bernini, warmly interested for you : you must cultivate her favourable sentiments. In the interim, I strongly advise you to give a grand

concert, and assemble the most brilliant conversazione in your power—throw open the doors of this merchant's house, and let in all Naples—be vivacious, airy, and witty—dress yourself with more than your former splendour—bespeak a new equipage, and let your servants—— But where is your household, where are your Volanti, your valets, and your Camerieri?"

" They abandoned me with my good fortune," replied Rosaura coldly.

" Such is human nature!" observed the Countess, adjusting her dress in a mirror. " Poor human nature! it is a sad compound of selfishness and folly!"

" My present household," resumed Rosaura, " consists of two strange mortals, who in the wreck they witnessed, thought of my interest in preference to their own: they do not recoil from my apprehended poverty, but have readily and cheerfully followed me here, where I have been received with the utmost respect and kindness."

" Undoubtedly you have been received with respect ! Strange indeed if the wife of Signor di Ruvello should not be treated with the utmost respect by a trader ! As to the *kindness* you speak of, I cannot understand the expression. Is your demeanour so void of dignity as to give room for the familiarity of kindness ? Consider, Signora Ruvello, that you now appertain to a family who possess property enough to sustain the decorum due to their rank. The word *kindness* as you applied it, is extremely absurd. But to my former subject—you must likewise buy in the most costly and elegant of your furniture ; and when you have discarded all this, which is not fit for any apartment of yours, place your own here, and I will direct your choice in a new household. When you have so far arranged yourself, I will then drag all my friends hither, and Marchioness Bernini shall bring hers, so that with respect to a brilliant society, which in your situation is of the first importance,

importance, you will not have lost anything by your reverse. Then, when we have properly established our faction, it will be determined whether the Venari influence is superior to our's!"

Rosaura would now have spoken, but the Countess, without allowing her time to utter a syllable, thus continued.

"Really I have at this moment some hope of you: this placidity is much more rational than the absurd desolation you fell into just now! But I believe that no one is more successful than myself in battling with grief and despair. *A-propos*, if you wish to preserve my friendship, and do not mean to quarrel with all the world, you will conciliate the Marquis D'Asavoli. You have judgment and good sense, my fair cousin; take a hint when it will be serviceable to you. Adieu!—I shall call for you this evening in my way to the Bernini Palace."

"This evening!" repeated Rosaura; "impossible! This evening, Countess

Almerini, whilst my exiled husband surrounded by inexorable guards, is casting his melancholy regards on plains he quits forever, whilst he is sighing his reluctant adieu to his native land, and the unfortunate youth who fell by his hand, yet remains an unburied corse!"

" And in what does this immediately concern you ? " interrupted she. " Did you fight this luckless duel, or are you banished ? Signora Ruvello, my patience is almost exhausted ; I would serve you if you would suffer me, but I am compelled to say that such perverseness I never witnessed. You would actually provoke me to join the outcry of that woman with her idiotic daughter, but that I am too much irritated by her presumption, to coincide in any thing she asserts ! "

Rosaura refused however, to yield to this proposition of the Countess, because she thought it would be an outrage to decency ; and her imperious visitor left her

her without any symptom of that extreme complacency she had assumed at her entrance, yet with a sufficient affectation of friendship and patronage, to render it evident she had some point to carry which she thought worth an effort.

After her departure, the recollection of her inconsequent conduct and imprudent advice, the cruel slanders and malignity of Signora Alviano, the suspicious designs of Asavoli, and her own desolate state, made Rosaura shudder; and after revolving it in every point of view, she determined to make known the reverse of fortune which had befallen Ruvello and herself, to her uncle and his wife, in the hope that it might induce them to give her their personal protection and countenance: yet she wrote the afflicting detail with extreme reluctance, from a generous unwillingness to inflict pain or inquietude.

“ Dear friends of my youth !” sighed she, as she closed her letter, “ how quickly will this cruel intelligence follow

your own misfortune! Would I could spare you the knowledge of my embarrassment and distress!"

The idea of their concern for herself and their compassion for Ruvelio, induced her however, to hesitate for some time whether she should dispatch the letter, or destroy it: but the inhumanity and general disregard of her husband's family, which she had slightly mentioned, impelled her to seek consolation and support where nature gave her a claim to find them; and the letter was at length sent.

Rosaura then gave orders to be denied to every one but Countess Almerini, or any other of the family of Ruvello who might think it decent to honour her with a visit either of consultation or condolence; but these exceptions might have been spared, for the Countess returned not either to dictate or advise, and every other of her husband's connections kept aloof.

In the midst of an abandonment so selfish and so cruel, Rosaura yet found
reason

reason to rejoice in the steady attachment of her faithful servants, and the solicitous kindness of her old host, who directed and urged the proffered services of his sister and his household, with a zeal which benevolence or self-interest could alone inspire. He appeared to wish that Rosaura should suppose it to be the latter, but she read in the humanity visible in his aspect, a different motive ; and could she have beheld the daily succession of suppliants whose wants were relieved at the dawn of day, and in the dusk of evening, at the well-known door of the merchant Anselmo, she could not have been better assured of it.

The next morning Countess Almerini reappeared, accompanied by Asavoli and Ernesto di Brandosi ; an association that did not render her by any means more welcome to Rosaura : and the party had scarcely entered, before the Marchioness Bernini attended by three Cavaliers of high rank and dissolute characters, was

announced to her by Giovanno with evident reluctance.

"Charming Signora Ruvello," said the lady, "your servant made a difficulty of admitting me: but as I beheld the equipage of my friend Countess Almerini at the door, I insisted: here I am therefore, earnest to join my condolences to her's at the little fracas that has happened. But you look like an angel still, and all mankind must yet wear your chains! Why were you not at the conversazione of the Princess di Parmeno last night?"

"The turtle was mourning her absent mate," returned the Countess, "when she should have been employed in procuring interest for his immediate return!"

At this hint, every one present pressed upon Rosaura offers of service the most devoted, yet in a manner so vague and unmeaning, that she could merely return to them a general acknowledgment; yet she compelled herself to utter it in an accent

accent of apparent thankfulness ; and whilst she was pronouncing the sentence, Orvino was announced. Her voice faltered at the sound of his name, the pointed regards of the Countess Almerini heightened the colour on her cheek, and the half-formed accents remained unuttered.

The bosom of Asavoli swelled with rage as he observed this, and his indignant aspect which likewise met her eye, still more completely disconcerted her.

As Orvino entered, he regarded the assemblage that formed her levee with a momentary surprise, and his half-recoiling mien was not less noticed than the embarrassment of Rosaura.

"Count Orvino appears to behold some object he was not entirely prepared to see," said Countess Almerini with a sneer.

"I am always prepared," answered he with an assumed air of unconcern, "for the raillery my awkwardness or inadvertence may provoke from Countess Almerini."

Then presenting a letter to Rosaura, who instantly recognised the writing of Ruyello—

" I received this," he resumed, " but a few minutes back, enclosed in a billet addressed to myself: and supposing that the contents might be at least consolatory, if not otherwise important, I would not delay an unnecessary moment delivering it into your hand."

Rosaura received the letter with a silent acknowledgment; then reproaching herself for a coldness apparently so ungrateful, she forced her lips to utter a sentence in which she meant to express a sense of obligation; but there was so much hesitation in her accent, and so much of constraint in her manner, that she wished most earnestly the effort had not been made at all.

Ernesto di Brandosi, who had observed the scene with extreme attention, was now impelled by compassion to relieve her evident distress; and as Rosaura still retained

retained the letter in her hand, he intimated to the Marchioness Bernini, whom he knew to be more tractable than her friend, that Signora Ruvello probably wished to read it without any witness of the emotion it might create.

"That idea is reasonable," said the Marchioness, "as the letter is from Signor Ruvello. My good Ernesto, as I often tell the Duke, is much more considerate and discreet than his uncle."

Then addressing Rosaura—

"Charming Signora Ruvello," continued she, "I must see you this evening at my conversazione. The Princess di Parmeno indeed, is one of those who earnestly wish you to continue your seclusion, because she desires still to reign unrivalled in our circle; but I hope you will immediately resume the sceptre she is so much less worthy than yourself to wield, since the suffrages of the Graces, as well as those of the world, are wholly your's."

"You are too obliging," said Countess Almerini;

Almerini ; " I am certain my fair cousin is fully sensible of your condescension, and I will conduct her to you this evening."

Rosaura, depressed and still embarrassed, had not sufficient resolution to oppose this, and the Marchioness and her train then retired.

Countess Almerini rising almost immediately, demanded of Orvino, with an air not to be mistaken, if he would accompany her, or if he remained with Signora Ruvello.

" I am concerned that I cannot do either," returned he coldly : " an affair of moment imperiously requires my immediate attention."

Then bowing to Rosaura, he left the room.

" He is offended with me, and very justly," thought she : " what an unfortunate, what a distressing scene!"

Countess Almerini, whose aspect betrayed her rage and disappointment,
followed

followed in a few moments with Ernesto di Brandosi ; and to the extreme discomposure of Rosaura, Asavoli remained, who addressed her with an entreaty that she would command his fortune and his life, if either the one or the other could procure a return of that amiable serenity and vivacity of which he regretted the absence.

Extremely offended both with the subject and the manner in which it was mentioned, Rosaura, adverting to the letter she wished to read, intimated that she desired to be alone ; but instead of complying with her hint, he proceeded to insinuate that he could easily discern what was the aim of the Marchioness Bernini, and more openly averred that Countess Alnierini meant to make him a mere convenient dupe : but that he should not yield up his pretensions either to them or to Count Orvino."

" What are your pretensions ? " demanded Rosaura indignantly : " and why am I again thus insulted ? You have taken

taken courage from the distress of my situation, and the enforced absence of my husband, to whom you pretended a friendship that evidently never could have existed, to avow sentiments that could not have passed the lips of a man of real honour! Can you suppose that I shall fail to view such a conduct as it deserves to be considered!"

She then summoned Maria to the apartment, whom she detained in it until the Marquis, compelled to discontinue both his accusations and his proffers, thought proper to leave the house. Maria was then dismissed, and Rosaura, unable to obtain courage immediately to open the letter she still held with the seal unbroken, mused for a few moments upon its probable contents.

"What illusive hope still feeds the impossible expectations of poor Ruvello!" exclaimed she. "How strange, how fatally strange it is, that those sudden vicissitudes which we behold nearly without surprise

surprise in the fortunes of others, should be regarded as almost impossible when they happen to ourselves ! A man new to misfortune, views the stroke that first threatens, and finally attains him, as a horrible chimera, which the next day, or the next, will destroy ! We are singled out, Ruvello, amidst the herd of insects who flutter out a life of folly, to give to those who surround us that lesson which yet they will not learn, and convince them—could they indeed be convinced—that the affluence and splendour to which they are so strongly attached, a moment may snatch from them, and that those possessions which men obtain with difficulty, and seek with ardour, preserve with tenacious anxiety, and bequeath with tedious and minute forms, one moment may annihilate, or give into the hands of another, who receives with equal eagerness, and grasps with equal fondness the ideal benefit that sometimes flies from him like a dream, and ever takes its
cameleon-

ameleon-like essence of good or evil, blessing or curse, from the heart of its possessor ! How, alas ! have I—how has Ruvello employed the means of dispensing ease and comfort to our suffering fellow-creatures ? I, like him, have been contented with relieving my own wounded feelings, by casually removing the distress and the penury I have accidentally beheld : but have we sought out the miserable, the sick, the helpless, and divided with them our abundance ! Oh Heaven, no ! Henceforth then, I will thank the great Dispenser for the scantiness of my meal, and compassionate the mistaken mortal who like the Prelate Repari, daily offers a solemn thanksgiving for the gorgeous load with which his table groans, to encourage sensuality and fill him with disease, whilst his numerous and insolent domestics drown with oaths and threats the clamours of a wretch who begs the morsel that is denied him ! Ruvello and myself have never, it is true, thus

thus atrociously mocked the Deity ; but our negligence has been culpable, and our talent misemployed. Is this likewise his reflection ! Alas, I fear not ! This paper which now trembles in my hand, will inform me that he is merely solicitous to regain the fancied distinction of being received amidst the slaves of that dissipation his better sense condemns, and of replacing the fetters which have already galled him so severely. Yet I may find myself pleasingly mistaken : his mind, naturally strong, may have overcome the dread of poverty, and he may have resolved to encounter it with firmness and fortitude !”

The letter thus expressed the sentiments of Ruvello.

“ I have quitted Naples, my beloved Rosaura, under a sentence of eternal banishment ! What, Oh God ! . could

could support me in an event so afflictive, but the hope—the more than hope—the reliance I have that I leave within its walls, an advocate so powerfully persuasive, that any well-sustained effort she may make, must be successful. You are that advocate, Rosaura, and it is the cause of your banished husband that you must plead. I know your heart to be the seat of every generous virtue, and that this idea will give an energy to your efforts that will ensure your triumph, and restore me once more to my native land, and the possessions of which I am now deprived; and what is still more important to the peace of my mind, to the power of supporting you as a daughter of the House of Viralva should be supported.

" My aunt Alviano, I find, claims the domains I have so long enjoyed from the will of my uncle Alfonso. I own that this intelligence, which my friend Orvino reported to me, shocked me for a moment; but, my Rosaura, I am convinced on reflection,

reflection, that if she should succeed in obtaining them, she means to give up the revenue to us—for this purpose only can she sue for them! She has ever demonstrated for me both affection and consideration, and for you she has the partial fondness of a mother—continue, therefore, to respect and attend to her, I beseech you!

" My cousin Almerini, as I observed to you at our melancholy interview, you may command in every way: her purse and her heart will be equally open to you. This is an extreme consolation to me; but you must submit to be guided in some respects, by that experience, which her superior years and her longer residence in the world have given her! My friend Orvino merely does justice to your prudence and discretion, in asserting that you cannot be better guided than by them. But, my dear Rosaura, there is a sort of judgment, or rather a habit of judging, which can only be acquired by a longer and

and a closer observation than you can possibly have had opportunities for. Orvino has some little pique against the Countess, which naturally influences his opinion of her; but confide in mine, my dear Rosaura, at least upon this subject: she never has, nor will she ever take a greater latitude than the world readily gives a woman of rank and talents equal to those she possesses. I request you then most earnestly to overcome any little coldness arising from misapprehension, which from the hints of Orvino, I suspect to exist between you, and receive her friendly and well-meaning counsels with the attention I flatter myself you would pay to my own.

“Orvino has recommended the Dottore Buonalma to be your Procuratore; but as I represented to him, he is a mere good sort of man, and not sufficiently known to be much respected: but you will require a Procuratore of eminence, one who will have judgment enough to extract some advantage

advantage from every event that may occur. Asavoli, I recollect, had infinite reason to be satisfied with the Dottore Buonatesta who conducted his late suit: I wish therefore that you apply to this Procuratore, and I shall be then certain that you are in good hands.

"The Marquis has written to me at some length, notwithstanding that his time has been so entirely occupied by the necessary attendance upon the Archbishop: he gives the strongest assurances of assistance and support against the effects of the resentment of the Venari family, and I know that his influence as well as his interest, are very powerful.

" You are not therefore either unprotected or unaided in the task which appears to your timidity so difficult and almost hopeless. Orvino, I suppose, had infected you with his apprehensions of disgusts and dangers which I am convinced you will never encounter. I must, however, confess myself much indebted to

to the friendly consideration he has evinced, and I know I may entirely rely upon the steadiness of his attachment to me: yet whilst I have the most perfect confidence in his integrity and honour, I severely feel at this moment that caustic reserve that characterizes his manners, when the follies and imprudencies which scarcely any of us are wholly free from, come under his discussion. Still however, I respect him highly, and I must acknowledge that he has been essentially friendly and useful in many views.

“ His idea of fixing you in the house of the merchant Anselmo, he urged with such tenacity, that I could not for the moment refuse my concurrence; but it has traversed my wish that you should reside with Countess Almerini until a habitation suited to your rank and pretensions in society, could be found. Regard it therefore as a mere temporary asylum, and let me entreat you to watch over the easiness of your temper, lest this

Anselmo

Anselmo, or any part of his family, forget the respect and deference due to the wife of a noble, exiled though he be. Adieu, my Rosaura!—preserve your health, even your vivacity if possible, for you will find it serviceable. I cannot have the consolation of hearing from you until I arrive at Rome, of which I will instantly give you intimation. In the interim, rally your spirits, range our mutual friends round you, and encourage those hopes I wish you to share with me.

“ I am ever your’s,

“ ALFONSO DI RUVELLO.”

“ Those hopes you wish me to share with you!” repeated Rosaura. “ Mistaken, self-deceived Ruvello, what a tissue of fallacious reliances are here detailed to me! Yet what can I do! Only this—follow the injunctions of my

husband, and abide by the event with fortitude and patience; or if this cannot be, let me shrink in silence, and complain only to Heaven! Surely, however, I shall be sustained by the presence of my uncle Di Boschero, if not by that of his wife: they will both perhaps hasten hither, when they learn my disastrous situation, and in two days more I may possibly embrace them. Under their protection, the voice of calumny will no longer pursue me, and I may then reflect upon the benevolence of the considerate Orvino, without that dread and affright that now accompany even the gratitude to which he has entitled himself! How coldly, how constrainedly does Ruvollo acknowledge the kindness of this unfeigned friend, because he will not sooth him with praise, where praise would be flattery, or forbear the glance that may reprove, when reproof would check a weakness. To Orvino alone, as

I justly

I justly suspected, am I indebted for the asylum which now shelters me from the slavery Countess Almerini would have imposed upon me under her own roof, and in some degree from the pursuit of the detested Asavoli, which she appears desirous of encouraging: but in my own heart I must shut up the sentiment the disinterested friendship of Count Orvino excites!"

CHAP. IX.

IN the evening, Rosaura attired herself with a heavy heart to accompany Countess Almerini to the conversazione of the Marchioness Bernini: a compliance to which she was determined by the positive instructions of Ruvello, as she had previously resolved to remain at home under a plea of indisposition, which would have had much more of truth than pretext in it.

When Countess Almerini beheld her unadorned by any of those expensive baubles, which in her opinion gave the wearer undoubted consideration with the world, she passed with her into her dressing-room,

room—for as usual, the Countess was accompanied by her Cavalieri; and chiding her for omitting so necessary a part of her adjustment, desired her to improve it by wearing her jewels.

"I no longer possess any," replied Rosaura, giving the information reluctantly, from an apprehension not only of the minute enquiry it would produce, but the too probable disapprobation that would follow it.

"How have you disposed of them?" demanded the Countess hastily.

"I will inform you when you have leisure to attend to my recital," returned Rosaura.

"Your recital, Signora Ruvello!" retorted she. "I will, if you please, excuse the accompanying graces of oratory with which perhaps you mean to embellish the fact, that I may instantly learn it."

"The recital of the fact shall merely

be embellished by the strictest truth," returned Rosaura, offended by the insolence of her demeanour, and the suspicions her words implied. "I transmitted half my jewels to Signor Astolfo di Boschero, my uncle, and returned the remaining half to Ruvello, the too generous donor."

"Too generous indeed!—and thus the property of my infatuated cousin has been lavished! Your uncle, Signora Ruvello, should have been satisfied—as surely he might—with having withheld the scanty portion which I find you possessed, without proceeding to pillage the convenient husband he so dexterously secured, of the numberless rich effects he carried with him, and now possessing himself of gems which would have been prized by the heiress of a sovereign Dukedom, whilst a poor daughter of the ruined house of Viralva scatters them as her fancy directs! The necklace and diadem I would

would myself have purchased—but you can afford to give them it seems—to a Boschero!"

"Spare me, I conjure you," said Rosaura with some vehemence, "the dreadful oppression which a conduct so ungenerous; and reproaches so injurious occasion me! How can you cruelly add to the malice of my destiny, by insults such as these! Should you not rather seek the applauses of your own heart—"

"Have you merited the applause of your own heart," interrupted the Countess, "or the applause of your deluded husband's family, for thus shamefully dissipating or secreting what in his madness he so absurdly lavished? Your uncle no doubt merits all your confidence, and he will assuredly testify his gratitude and affection, although you have nothing further to bestow! If this be your opinion, you will I believe, find yourself in an error, and then perhaps you will deign to accept that counsel and protection

from me, which you have hitherto rejected : but I may possibly be then weary of offering either to a woman who evinces so little consideration for me. You well know that I particularly admired both the diadem and the necklace ; but my wishes, my inclinations are of little moment to you, who have beheld the world at your feet, and imagine I suppose, that you may still command it : but you will shortly discover, Signora Ruvello, that you derived your consequence not from your vaunted beauty, or your wonderful mind, but from the possessions of your husband!"

"I have already discovered this," returned Rosaura, endeavouring to conquer the irritation of her temper : "you have for some little time past, kindly assisted my perception, Countess Almerini—will you now allow me to remark that your Cavalieri are awaiting your return to them, and that you are misemploying that time in reproving me for an irretrievable error, which you could pass much

more

more pleasingly at the Bernini Palace. I am now totally unfit to attend you ; but I do not reject either your counsel or your protection—yet let me, I entreat you, find the one accompanied with temper, and the other with humanity, and I will receive them with gratitude."

" If you are sincere in that assertion," returned the Countess, who now thought proper to use a more conciliating tone, " you will not refuse to comply with my request, that you appear this evening in a society, many individuals of which have the power of advancing your interest considerably. Perhaps the simplicity of your present adjustment will be supposed to result from choice, not necessity, and will be rather applauded than condemned. I will not be refused—I may have been too hasty just now, and your acquiescence I shall consider as the test of your forgiveness."

Rosaura wearied alike with her tyranny and her importunity, assented in silence.

and they returned to the saloon, where the Marquis D'Asavoli had joined the other Cavaliers, and with an aching head and heavy heart Rosaura was compelled to allow his attendance.

"Orvino appears not!" sighed she: "is it resentment or prudence that detains him from me? Yet surely he might have sent an excuse, or he might have alledged some reason for his absence, that would have exempted him from any suspicions of neglect!"

When the party entered the conversazione, the first object that struck the eyes of Rosaura, was Signora Alviano, who turned disdainfully from her, without replying to her salutation in the usual form.

At once shocked and pained by this palpable symptom of enmity, Rosaura yet found courage to address her.

"Why do you thus, Signora Alviano," said she in a low voice, "reject the homage of respect and affection it is ever

my

my wish to offer you?—Continue to prosecute your claims; and if they are just, I sincerely hope they will be successful, whether it be the destiny of your nephew to be reinstated in his possessions, or unfortunately otherwise. But in making this claim, which no doubt you believe to be a duty you owe to your amiable Virginia, do not by any symptom of coldness or displeasure in your conduct towards me or Ruvello, give the world to conclude that you supposed either of us capable of retaining for one day, that property or those domains of which we believed another to have a preferable title. Discard, I entreat you, that aspect of scorn and anger, and suffer me——”

“ I retire from an expostulation equally artful and ill-timed,” interrupted Signora Alviano: “you well know the just motive you have given me for contempt and dislike!”

This sentence which was uttered in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by nearly

half the assembly who were then present, was interpreted at least a hundred different ways ; and every eye was turned upon Rosaura, who rendered desperate by an insult so public, and such a succession of mortifications, endeavoured to follow Signora Alviano as she withdrew, to demand an explicit and unequivocal charge, to which she might as explicitly reply : but the crowd which generally attended the evening parties of the Marchioness Bernini, entirely defeated her intention ; and though she was assisted by the Marquis D'Asavoli and Ernesto di Brandosi, Signora Alviano had actually left the house without the least danger of being further incommoded by the expostulations of her fair and luckless niece.

In the antichamber she was joined by the Marchioness, who professed her concern and her astonishment at the intemperate anger of Signora Alviano ; and observing that Rosaura appeared much agitated and distressed, she insisted upon

conducting her to her cabinet, that she might have leisure to recover her spirits and her composure.

Rosaura sick, weary, and inconceivably depressed, assented ; and the Marchioness having given a whispered direction to a domestic, led her to a private apartment, where she procured restoratives which she compelled her to take, and then left her, with an injunction to remain quietly where she was, until Countess Almerini was disposed to retire.

“ Your absence from the public apartments shall not be disadvantageous to you,” added the Marchioness, “ for I will instantly set about such a discussion of the injurious treatment of your aunt Alviano, that the world shall perfectly understand it.”

The Marchioness then left her, and Rosaura resting her throbbing temples on her hands, could not avoid reflecting with some bitterness of spirit upon the injustice and cruelty she experienced from a woman,

a woman, who until her reverse of fortune, suffered only expressions of respect and admiration to pass her lips. Tears at length came to her relief, and at the conclusion of another half hour, her emotion was entirely calmed, and she waited with considerable impatience for a summons from Countess Almerini.

The expected summons was however still delayed, and Rosaura was rising to ring a bell, when the Duke di Brandosi entering the cabinet with precipitation; carefully closed the door, and advanced towards her.

Rosaura regarding him with surprise and affright, made an effort to summon a domestic; but he caught the hand she had stretched out, and prevented her purpose.

"Signora Ruvello, deign to listen to me," said he: "why do you manifest this repugnance and this terror? I have indeed received from you an affront of the most mortifying nature; but you have

the

the power of healing the wound you gave. Your preference of Asavoli and Count Orvino to myself, who wished most ardently to be distinguished by you, I could not but sensibly feel, and for some time I mistook displeasure for dislike or indifference. But, Oh how vainly have I thought that I could find in inferior attractions a charm that would render me invulnerable to your's!—every succeeding interview convinced me more fully of my error, and now——”

Rosaura having with some difficulty disengaged herself, rung the bell with a vehemence which was the effect of mingled anger and apprehension : she believed herself to have been betrayed into her present situation by the treachery of Countess Almerini as well as that of the Marchioness, and resolved instantly to quit the house where the one presided, and where the other was an approved associate.

The Duke di Brandosi finding that the
summons

summons was not attended to, continued to urge his plea with increasing confidence, and having so placed himself, that Rosaura could neither escape nor renew her fruitless application to the bell, he resumed with an air of menace that at once terrified her and provoked her indignation.

“ Do not compel me to add threats to entreaties,” said he: “ you do not act with your accustomed good sense, Signora Ruvello, in rejecting with such unchecked contempt the services I might be enabled to render you in your present situation, could I but assure myself that you would properly estimate them. If I find myself still inexorably repulsed by you, why should I not make myself an interest elsewhere, and at the same time avenge my unmerited defeat by traversing your designs in favour of Ruvello—Ruvello, that ingrate, who could subject you to the reverse you experience, to maintain an opinion your beauty and your merit should have prevented him from uttering or conceiving.

conceiving. Had I been favoured by Signora Ruvello, could I have spoken in impious rapture of the charms of another woman, oh how inferior!—Yet Ruvello could do this——”

Rosaura now made a successful effort to express her disgust: and avowing her determined resolution not to credit any insinuation which was injurious to her husband, insisted that the Duke di Brandosi instantly suffered her to pass to the public apartments.

“ Not until I have obtained one concession,” replied he; “ make only an offering to my mortified pride by rejecting the continued attendance of those Cavaliers, for whom mine was refused—”

At this moment Rosaura heard a step in the corridor, and after vainly attempting to pass her insolent jailer, impelled by her increasing indignation, she called aloud: the step was instantly arrested, and the door flew open.

“ What insolence is this!” exclaimed
the

the Duke, on beholding in the intruder Ernesto di Brandosi: "retire, presumptuous that you are!"

"Not unless Signora Ruvello should command it," replied he firmly.

"Retire instantly!" resumed his uncle in an accent of ungovernable rage.

"Do you wish to be conducted to your carriage?" demanded the nephew, addressing Rosaura, who was retreating from the scene with a hasty but trembling pace.

"I wish to quit this house," replied she, "I care not in what manner."

The Duke no longer able to command the fury that had seized him, rushed forward, and struck the young man with considerable violence as he was following Rosaura, and the next moment she beheld their swords opposed to each other, and the clashing of the steel added to the horror she experienced, by giving her to suppose that every stroke was fatal.

"Forbear, in the name of Heaven
forbear!"

forbear!" she exclaimed in a voice of agony. "Signor Ernesto, what are you doing—forbear, I conjure you!"

Ernesto apparently attended to this adjuration; for instead of pressing upon his opponent, he merely parried his thrusts; but the Duke became only the more enraged at his moderation; and Rosaura dreading every moment to behold one of them fall, called for help. Several domestics attended the summons; but though they presumed not to interfere, one of them flew to procure the aid of some Cavalier, and soon returned with the Marquis D'Asavoli, who beat down the point of the Duke's weapon, and stepped between him and Ernesto.

The Marchioness Bernini having been advertised by one of her servants of the circumstance, now appeared.

"What madness impels you!" exclaimed she: "is it your intention to be arrested in my house? Signor Ernesto, your conduct is unpardonable—what infatuation

ation could urge you to raise your arm against your uncle? You might methinks, have found a less exceptionable opponent, and another place for your sanguinary purpose!"

" My purpose," returned he, " was not sanguinary, and my action self-defence. The Duke di Brandesi is indeed my uncle—would he were not——"

The Marchioness perceiving that any controversy at such a moment, could not be conciliating, desired him to withdraw; which however, he refused to do until Countess Almerini left the house, or declined his further attendance.

At this moment the Countess herself followed by several Cavaliers who had heard a rumour of the affray, joined the party, and she removed his punctilious objection by granting the dispensation he required. Rosaura wished to thank him for his generous interference in her behalf, but she feared lest the slightest mark of approbation or gratitude from her would renew

renew the intemperate choler of his uncle, and she suffered him to leave the house without venturing the acknowledgment she earnestly desired to offer him.

Asavoli and the Countess now assailed her with enquiries; but she indignantly referred them to the Duke di Brandosi, who having sullenly beheld the retreat of Signor Ernesto, seemed now disposed to seek an occasion for animosity with whoever else might approach him.

"This affair appears equally inexplicable to me," said the lady of the mansion; "but I must repress my curiosity and yours for the present, and entreat that you assist me in hushing any report of the fracas for the sake of Signora Ruvello, who seems to be unaccountably implicated in it. We must immediately reappear, and Signora Ruvello must aid us in giving it an air of frolic that may dissipate any idea injurious to herself."

"I cannot accede to this plan," said Rosaura: "I am too much indisposed, and

and much too seriously offended by the Duke di Brandosi, to sanction it. I leave it to him however, to reveal the occasion of the rencontre, and I hope he will do justice to Signor Ernesto, and blush for himself when he relates it! Countess Almerini," added she, "I must beg you to allow me the liberty of using your carriage, and of employing your servants to convey me home."

Without waiting a reply, Rosaura left the room; and Asavoli following her, earnestly entreated as they descended the stairs, some explanation of the scene.

"I can well imagine," added he, "that it results from the machinations of the Marchioness. But from whence came the elder Brandosi? He did not appear in the conversazione, and every one concluded that he was engaged at the concert of the Princess di Parmeno!"

Rosaura almost as much disgusted with the Marquis as with the set she had quitted, made no reply; and though she could

could not avoid allowing him to accompany her to her own door, she avowed herself too ill to converse, and remained in a state of silent lassitude and dejection until she reached it, which she thought it impossible any further distress or alarm could heighten.

Asavoli expressed much concern for her indisposition, and conjured her to suffer the immediate attendance of a physician, which Rosaura declined, and he was then compelled to bid her adieu.

Early the next morning, Signor Anselmo learned that his fair inmate was in a high fever, accompanied with a strong delirium; and instantly sending his sister to add her assistance and attendance to that of the affrighted Maria, he procured her every aid which attention or medicine could give: but for several days it was extremely doubtful if they would be avail-
ing; and in this interval, Countess Almerini contented herself with twice sending a cold enquiry, and Signora Alviano

Alviano not in the least softened by the dangerous situation of Rosaura, could not prevail upon herself even to make this complimentary offering to decency.

Spite of the cheerless reflections however, that perpetually assailed her, whenever she was in a state to reflect upon her isolated situation, the youth of Rosaura at length successfully combated with her malady; but the horror of being thus completely cast upon the mercy of strangers, and the consciousness of being unable to repay Signor Anselmo even the money he had disbursed for her, preyed upon her mind, and left her in a state of depression more dreadful than the most painful attack of sickness.

When however, her convalescence was ascertained, Maria was instructed to present her a letter, which the good Anselmo would no longer withhold from her, because he learned from Count Orvino that it was probably from Signor Astolfo di Boschero or his wife, as the postmark evidenced

evidenced that it came from the place of their residence.

"It is from my uncle!" exclaimed Rosaura in a sudden tremor of joy, "to inform me when I may cast myself into his protecting arms!"

Hastily she opened the welcome paper, and having eagerly read the first lines, the faint colour forsook her cheek, whilst with a throbbing heart she hurried over the remainder: then starting from her seat, and catching Maria by the gown—"Do not leave me I charge you," said she wildly—"do not fly me! The whole world abandons me, yet do not you forsake your hapless mistress!"

"Who me, Signora!" ejaculated the girl, "no, never, whilst I can remember your goodness to me and to my poor family, and that I know I shall remember to my death! Whoever has wrote such a thing," added she indignantly, "wrote a lie, and I would tell them so to their face!"

" Yet why should I detain you ? " resumed Rosaura ; " it would be cruel and selfish ! Go, then, Maria, but do not, when you turn your back upon me, scoff at my misfortunes, and load me with obloquy, as those have done, upon whom my weary soul rested for comfort, for support—for life itself ! "

Maria now began to weep bitterly, and defended her conduct and intentions with the utmost earnestness from the calumny she believed to have been levelled against them.

" You weep ! " exclaimed Rosaura ; " teach me likewise to shed tears, and they will relieve my aching head and bursting heart ! "

Maria was now terrified at her incoherence, and throwing herself at her feet, clung to her knees, and conjured her Lady to discard an idea so afflicting to her, as that of her desertion.

" Could I be such a wretch," added Maria, " I know that God would never prosper

prosper me. Ah, believe me, Signora, I will serve you all my life as zealously and as faithfully as Heaven is served by its own saints!"

Unconsciously soothed by her grateful affection, Rosaura at length found relief in a torrent of tears.

" My kind Maria," said she, when they had in some degree subsided, " how healing to my bruised spirit are this fidelity and attachment ! On what flinty bosoms have I leaned for consolation, and how cruelly have I been wounded and repulsed ! To you Maria, to you I now turn for friendship and assistance."

" What you command me to do, that I will do," replied Maria firmly : " and if to serve you, I must jump into the Gulf of Monte di Somma, I would say my prayers and throw myself in !"

As she spoke, Rosaura regarded her fixedly, and then said—" Maria, I will wholly confide in you—your unfeigned demonstration of affection, and my desti-

tute state, equally urge me to the request I now make you. The fortune of my husband you must know, is entirely confiscated, and from several accidental circumstances independent of that one— Oh Heaven!" exclaimed he, suddenly interrupting herself, "can my cruel uncle and his barbarous wife indeed consign me so unfeelingly to difficulties such as I must now experience, when I so recently manifested for them a sentiment so opposite—"

Another burst of tears choked her utterance, and prevented the conclusion of the sentence: but Maria now comprehended that the letter she had presented to her Lady, had disappointed her wishes and her expectations, and naturally concluded that she had applied to her uncle for money, and that her request had been refused.

"Do not thus give way to grief, Signora," said she in a persuasive accent: "indeed every body is not hard-hearted.

Signor

Signor Anselmo is a very good man, and I am sure if his own life was to have gone with your's, he could not have been more earnest that you should do well and recover: and then again the good Count Orvino—dear Lady, if other people forsake you, he never will!"

" Maria," interrupted Rosaura hastily, " I must, when I am able, leave this house. If I remain here, the most horrible slanders will pursue me—and I have likewise another reason still more urgent—but you must give me a promise, solemnly pledged, not to reveal the request I find myself compelled to make to you, and you must, to remove a dreadful anxiety that preys upon my mind, promise likewise to comply with it."

Maria wanted little inducement to satisfy her beloved Lady in both instances; and Rosaura then informed her that she must assist her to dispose of several superfluities which she particularized, for her immediate maintenance, and that she

must discharge Giovanno, whom it was not in her power to retain any longer in her service.

Maria appeared for some moments thunderstruck, and was speechless: but it was the silence of respectful grief, not of insolence or repugnance, and Rosaura understood the sentiment. When the poor girl regained her articulation, she again urged the kind solicitude of old Anselmo, and the zealous services of the Count, and conjured her Lady rather to avail herself of them, than resort to an expedient that shocked her only to think of.

Rosaura replied that it was impossible, consistently with prudence and decorum, that she should receive succours from either; for though the good merchant would be unobjectionable in himself as her benefactor, yet she could not but strongly suspect that he would merely be the agent of Count Orvino, and the world would suspect it likewise. She then reminded Maria of her double promise, who
acknow-

acknowledged herself bound to fulfil it in both instances.

The spirits of Rosaura appeared rather revived by the confidence she had reposed in this affectionate girl ; and she then gave into her possession several trinkets and some rich laces, to be converted into money : a task that seemed so tremendous and impossible to the inexperienced Maria, that she begged very earnestly her mother might be allowed to assist her in it.

Rosaura assented however, only upon condition that the same obligation of secrecy should be imposed upon her ; and Maria having undertaken for her discretion, and her entire devotion to the will of her benefactress, was eagerly sent upon the appointed mission.

CHAP. X.

MARIA had been gone little more than half an hour, when Signor Anselmo desired to have the honour of being admitted to Rosaura for a few moments, if she found herself sufficiently recovered to receive him without much fatigue.

Madame Beatrice who brought the message, replied to the enquiry of Rosaura concerning the nature of the business he wished to discuss, that her brother made a rule, from which no entreaty of hers could turn him, never to impart either his sentiments or his intentions to her, which she thought very hard, considering
she

she was his only sister, and almost his only relation, and that she was of years to be trusted in matters of greater importance than those he withheld from her.

Rosaura who had readily penetrated the extreme weakness of her intellects, and the frivolity of her disposition, made no immediate reply to this complaint, but returned an answer to the good merchant that she would await him.

"Surely," thought she, "no unlucky accident has befallen Maria, that can have exposed to Signor Anselmo the nature of the commission I have given her!—or have those reports so injurious to me reached him, and determined him to insist upon my expulsion!"

Amidst her anxious surmises, Anselmo entered with that aspect of sedate benevolence that gives confidence and hope to the suppliant, that causes the hand that receives, to be stretched out without reluctance, and the heart that would otherwise proudly writhe under obligations that

efface the stamp of independence on the soul, to expand with unmixed thankfulness and comfort.

After Anselmo had expressed the satisfaction he really seemed to experience at the rapid recovery of his fair inmate, and his hope that it would soon be perfected, he relieved her inquietude upon the motive of his visit, by informing her that he wished to communicate to her in person, the intelligence of his having been commissioned by Signor Ruvello, to supply her with any money she might require, under two thousand crowns; and he was, he said, the more earnest to acquaint her immediately with the circumstance, as he was compelled to embark the next day for Florence—a voyage which had hitherto been in some measure delayed by his anxiety for the result of her malady..

“ That it has terminated happily,” he added, “ I thank Heaven: for I could not behold the Signora Ruvello without expe-

experiencing an interest equally warm and respectful in her welfare, and a sentiment which, if my situation in society had been elevated to a better level with her own, I should venture to call paternal."

"I should suspect almost any other of mockery," returned Rosaura, "who spoke to me at this moment, of any elevation but that of soul and character, which henceforth it must be my study to attain. I thank you, Signor Anselmo, for the flattering sentiments you profess: it is indeed, highly grateful to me to have excited the esteem of a worthy man, and I find it some consolation for the misrepresentations of those, who know not perhaps, that they equally outrage truth as well as myself, or who wilfully calumniate me because I am in disgrace with fortune! As for the commission you say you have received from my husband, I will not call upon you to exercise it, because it will be necessary that I should be careful

of diminishing his resources, which I must be sensible are very few and very scanty."

"Pardon me if I say that I think you in this instance to blame," said Anselmo. "The money deposited in my hands is for your use alone, and Signor Ruvello has of course arranged his own particular concerns in a manner to render it unnecessary to himself."

"Even if he should have done so," replied she, "it will still be pleasant to discover an overplus in his account. Signor Anselmo, my resolution on this point must be irrevocable."

"Pardon the officiousness of my zeal, Signora," said he; "I meant merely to represent, not to argue. I hope to have the satisfaction on my return, which will be in a fortnight or three weeks, to find you less determined on the subject. Until then, it must certainly rest."

He then bade her adieu, but returned to the apartment to entreat that she would consider

consider the house and the domestics to be devoted to her service and convenience, and that his sister would readily on every occasion evince her respectful attachment.

"Even against the benevolence of this good old man," exclaimed Rosaura, "must I fence myself with rigid caution ! Countess Almerini, and long ere this, Signora Alviano equally comprehend that I have no resource ; and no doubt they will have learned that the merchant Anselmo, ennobled only by his virtues, is the friend of Count Orvino. I must then acquaint myself with poverty and want in their utmost deformity—I must contemplate their haggard features with the philosophy I have tauntingly been accused of affecting, and perhaps they will not then appear so repulsive and disgusting ! I will inure my soul to disappointment, to grief, to anguish of every kind, and plunge at once into the torrent of ills my adverse fortune presents to me, without waiting to be overtaken by the tide I cannot

cannot flee from. How miserably fallacious and deceitful are the hopes Ruvello so ardently cherishes—how little does he know that world in which the gay moments of his prosperous youth alone were spent ! Why should his family blush to abandon me, when my own so cruelly spurns me ?—and what expectation can I reasonably form of the favour or the clemency of others, when the man who fostered my orphan childhood, who has read my heart from infancy almost to the present hour, suspects, contemns, and renounces me upon the accusation of malice or credulity ? Oh my uncle, how harsh are your reproaches, how barbarous is your renunciation ! Yet, can he indeed abandon the only child of a sister he loved, at a juncture so full of anxiety, of difficulties of every kind ? It cannot surely be—my apprehensive haste has misled me ! ”

Again Rosaura opened the letter of Signor Astolfo, and her reluctant doubts were soon dispelled.

“ Your

" Your letter has reached me," wrote he ; " but, Signora Ruvello, I received almost at the same moment, intelligence but too well authenticated, that shut my heart against the distress you pretend to have encountered, and which you have so artfully depicted. The intelligence of which I speak, you cannot but be too conscious of the nature of, and I have no plea to doubt it, since it is derived from an authority that is undeniable."

" You are then, degenerate creature, lost to that honour the blood that nourishes your heart should have flowed to preserve, since you could boast what is now my disgrace, that you are descended from the Boscheri—a name I am thankful you never bore : that of Viralva you resigned in good time ! Henceforth I know you not. I shall instantly withdraw from this place, and retreat to some spot where

where your complaints and your infamy
cannot in future reach me !

“ ASTOLFO DI BOSCHERO.”

As these sentences again met the eye of Rosaura, a deep despondence stole over her bosom, and with the opened letter in her hand, she remained a considerable time fixed like a statue, her eyes unconsciously bent upon the writing, and her mind as void of reflection, as her person was of motion : yet a weight of inquietude lay heavy at her heart, and often impelled her to the relief of a deep and tremulous sigh.

A voice at length met her ear without awaking her from her abstraction : it was that of Maria.

“ Signora,” said she, “ Count Orvino — ”

“ Yes, yes !” said Rosaura.

“ I may admit him then ?” asked Maria.

“ Yes,

"Yes, yes," replied she, leaning her forehead upon her unoccupied hand.

Maria withdrew, and immediately returned with Orvino, who was evidently shocked at the alteration of her person, and the deep melancholy and depression which her countenance, her attitude, and her unequal respiration severally indicated.

He contemplated her in silence for some moments, and Maria, who likewise gazed upon her Lady with grief and consternation, no longer able to restrain her tears, retired to indulge them in another place.

"Will Signora Ruvello allow me," said Orvino, "to express my satisfaction that her late malady has so much abated—will she not deign to listen to me, or must I fear—"

Rosaura started from her seat.—"Count Orvino," exclaimed she, "why are you here!"

Then endeavouring to collect her scattered ideas—"Pardon me," she resumed in extreme confusion, "I know not what

I say—

I say—my mind is disturbed—my heart is oppressed! Vainly have I turned my languid eyes to meet the aspect of a friend, vainly have I sought one pitying bosom—forgive these tears—they relieve me; but I should repress them!"

"In me behold that friend," said Orvino warmly, "if you will allow me a title, I will exert every effort to render myself worthy of—in me behold a man who renders a just tribute of veneration and esteem to excellence like your's. Indulge your grief in my presence, since you cannot feel any sorrow I do not share. Fain would I arrest the source from whence it arises! Tell me how I may most effectually lessen your inquietudes—point out to me how I may eradicate every painful emotion from a heart so gentle, so amiable, so good!"

The accents and the manner of Orvino were so animated, as he rapidly uttered these sentences, that they recalled to the pale

pale cheek of Rosaura some part of the carnation that had lately deserted it.

"Your opinion flatters me," said she in a low tone: "but, Count Orvino, I hoped, I understood that you generously meant to ameliorate the destiny of my husband by your presence and your counsels, until he may be better reconciled to his fate, and better enabled to deliberate for himself. Have you yet heard from him?"

"I have not," replied he, in a more composed accent: "I had intended to have rejoined him before this, but I could not endure to carry him the afflicting intelligence, it would have been impossible to have concealed, that your health was severely affected by the anxiety to which you have been unhappily exposed. Would he not himself have regretted that I had not remained to ascertain to him your recovery: but now that I may, I hope, in giving him a reason for my absence,

absence, likewise assure him that it no longer exists, I will go——”

“ Immediately ?” enquired Rosaura.

“ Immediately,” replied he.

“ You will find him, I suppose, at Rome ?”

“ At Rome most probably. Shall I not be the bearer of a letter from you?”

“ I thank you, Count Orvino : Giovanno shall bring you one in two hours.”

“ I will call for it myself : perhaps you may then recollect some verbal communication for Ruvello, or some further command for myself.”

“ No indeed,” returned Rosaura in an anxious tone ; “ I shall not assuredly have occasion to give you any other trouble than that of bearing a letter to my unhappy Ruvello : I will now therefore, bid you adieu, and may Heaven recompense your generous friendship !”

“ Adieu, amiable Signora Ruvello, adieu !” repeated Orvino. “ I may perhaps,” added he, “ inform my friend that

you

you are not displeased with your abode, and that you will not for the present change it?"

"I cannot be more commodiously lodged," replied she with a sigh, "nor with people more earnestly desirous of affording me every satisfaction and convenience. Farewell, Count Orvino! my gratitude and good wishes accompany you."

"He leaves Naples, he leaves the kingdom!" exclaimed Rosaura when he had quitted the room: "will not this silence reports and rumours so hateful, so calumniating!"

"The good Count is gone," said Maria as she entered: "so now I will inform you, Signora, what my mother has done. When I first told her, she cried so much, that I thought she never would have been comforted: but she says Heaven will end your troubles, and you will be happy at last, even in this world; and I dare say it will be so, for we shall all pray for it."

Maria

Maria then gave an account of her mission; and the money she produced, for which her mother had carefully taken vouchers from the purchasers, was so much less than she expected, that far from enabling her to repay what she knew Signor Anselmo and his sister had expended for her, it was scarcely more than sufficient to pay the appointment of Giovanno, and suffice for her immediate use.

After some painful deliberation upon the subject, Rosaura recollects her intention of sending the letter to the Count; and this remembrance produced another, that she must not reveal the desperate state of her affairs, by dismissing Giovanno, until this too zealous friend could no longer learn it, either from the poor fellow himself, whom she was grieved to part with, or from the family of Anselmo.

Her letter to Ruvello hinted at some of the difficulties and discouragements she had encountered and she intimated her earnest

her earnest wish that he would absolve her of the promise she had made of remaining at Naples, longer than was absolutely necessary to arrange and provide for her departure: yet she entreated him to believe that she would still endeavour to follow his instructions as far as her ability extended.

The extreme inquietude which accompanied her through the night, impeded the further return of her health, and she arose the next day, weak and unrefreshed, but with a determined resolution to exert every faculty in endeavouring to overcome her evil fortune.

Having learned from Giovanno that Count Orvino had left Naples the preceding evening, she unwillingly informed this faithful fellow that she could no longer retain him; and notwithstanding his extreme reluctance to quit her service, she compelled herself to persevere in her design, when she had assured herself from his

his own report, that he could immediately be received into another household.

It was with considerable difficulty she prevailed upon him to receive the money due to him ; and then with a secret benediction and a lingering step, he quitted her presence. He impressively charged Maria to watch over the health of her Lady with redoubled zeal and attention, which she promised very solemnly ; and giving her the name and habitation of the family he intended to serve, that she might send to him if Rosaura appeared inclined to take him back, he left the house.

Notwithstanding every effort Rosaura could use to regain her health, and the strength which might empower her to use some exertion, more than a week passed ere she was in a state to make any active effort for the interest of Ruvello. In this time she made two written applications to Countess Almerini, to beg her assistance in procuring the attendance of

the Procuratore indicated by her husband, which good office she could not demand of the Marquis D'Asavoli, as he had informed her in a billet, that he should employ those days in which the remains of her regretted malady might prevent his attendance, in accompanying his uncle to his campagna : but Countess Almerini not condescending to return any answer to her application, Rosaura at length argued herself into a resolution to seek her, and a few of her former associates, shocked though her feelings were at their total neglect and abandonment of her.

She was compelled to hire a carriage for this irksome occasion, and equally spiritless and languid, she entered it, and was taken by her direction immediately to the habitation of Countess Alinerini, from whose domestics she learned that their Lady was at the villa of the Marchioness Bernini. At the door of Signora Alviano, which she did not chuse to pass unnoticed, she was told that the Padrona

was at the Convent where her daughter resided ; and at every other place, from a variety of pretexts, she was refused admittance, sometimes with contempt, sometimes with airs of compassion, and generally with an unceremonious abruptness, that very plainly indicated the sentiment herself and her equipage excited.

" I have performed a painful duty," ejaculated Rosaura, as she threw herself into a seat in her own apartment, " a *duty*, since my husband enjoined it—I have proved it to be an useless one--but it is past!"

Scarcely were her sinking spirits a little recruited by the refreshment Maria assiduously pressed her to take, ere the poor girl reluctantly informed her that in her absence, the Duke di Brandosi had claimed admittance to her in so insolent a manner, that Signora Beatrice having vainly assured him she was not in the house, had been terrified into fits, and was still very ill.

Rosaura was both shocked and alarmed
at

at this intelligence, and immediately sent Maria to express her concern at the circumstance, who returned with a very cold and stiff reply from Signora Beatrice.

"Father Mavido is with her," added Maria, "the sour-faced Carthusian you saw one day, Signora Padrona—and after his lectures, she is always cross and pettish, especially to me; and then she begins to talk about the whims of her brother in taking strangers into his house, and making more of them than his near kindred. I am sure the good Signor Anselmo would be very angry if he knew how she goes on!"

Rosaura reflected upon this intelligence with aggravated inquietude: her temper was not constituted to battle with the obstinate illiberality of little-minded folly, and she feared that she must seek a new habitation before she could hear from Countess Almerini, or give her notice of her intention, and before her strength was sufficiently restored, to enable her to

endure the necessary fatigue attending it. She was as much surprised as hurt to learn the disgust Signora Beatrice had conceived against her residence in the house, even before the insult of the Duke di Brandosi could have given her a pretext to alledge against it, as she had invariably been treated by this woman, whom she believed to be harmless, though weak, with the utmost personal deference and attention.

Whilst she was yet considering this vexatious incident, some person tapped at the anteroom door ; and Maria having attended the summons, returned with an aspect of surprise, to inform her Lady that Father Mavido desired to confer with her for a few moments.

Rosaura felt rather alarmed at this unexpected visit, yet she instantly desired that he might be conducted to her.

When the Carthusian was seated, he very solemnly opened the conference by recapitulating the scene Maria had mentioned,

tioned, which had produced so serious an effect upon Signora Beatrice : he then proceeded to state that as she wished to pass her hours in prayer and meditation, she would not subject herself to a repetition of it; and that with all possible deference to Signora Ruvello, she wished her to be aware that either she must quit the mansion of Anselmo, or his sister would be compelled to do so.

The Carthusian then hinted that whatever might be the sentiments of the merchant Anselmo, the world would not regard without indignation, the expulsion of Signora Beatrice from the roof which might be called her natural shelter.

" Far be it from me," replied Rosaura, " to give the world such a subject of animadversion and scandal ! Inform the Signora Beatrice that I will remove myself if possible, ere the week be out."

" In the interim," said Father Mavido, " this scene of which she complains, may be renewed—or at least, her apprehensions

of it will be almost as destructive to her."

"Well then, to-morrow or the next day," returned Rosaura, "I will relieve her from her apprehensions."

"In this you judge well and discreetly," said the Carthusian, rising.

Rosaura conducted him to the door with the respect his sacred function demanded, and then recalled Maria, to consult with her upon the instant sale of every thing in her possession which was not absolutely necessary to her.

Maria received the communication and instructions of her Lady with a sorrow she could not restrain; and Rosaura impelled by the tears and sobs of this faithful and affectionate creature, at length wept with her: but this was a weakness she would not long indulge in; and soon recovering her voice and her composure, she consoled Maria with hopes she had herself no confidence in, and then resolutely began the necessary task of assorting and

and arranging her effects into two packages, the one consisting of necessaries, the other of superfluities.

Again was the assistance of Maria's mother demanded, to dispose of the latter; but the good woman was now frightened at the importance of the task confided to her, and entreated that she might call in the aid of her husband, and of a friend of his who was more likely than either of them, to perform it properly.

To this proposition Rosaura was unwillingly obliged to yield, and in the evening of the following day she received eighty-three crowns as the produce of what had been consigned to their disposal.

A humble lodging had been likewise retained for her, and she resolved to remove to it without waiting the rising of another sun: she intimated therefore to Signora Beatrice that she wished to see her, and this good gentlewoman entering her apartment with an air of importance she had never before worn,

informed Rosaura in reply to her enquiries, that she was indebted to her brother forty-two crowns for the three weeks in which she had occupied the apartments he had thought proper to assign to her use.

Rosaura was startled at the magnitude of the sum ; but she now reflected with considerable surprise at her own neglect in omitting it, that she had never ascertained a point so important.

"Count Orvino should have mentioned this!" said she in an accent of vexation.

"As to what Count Orvino said," returned Beatrice, "I know nothing ; but my brother himself told me that he let you have this suite of rooms, which are the best in the house, for fourteen crowns a week, which, rich as I supposed him to be, I thought a good round sum in our pockets. Then, Signora, I paid your nurse and your doctors myself, and here is an account I kept of all the little dainties I paid for when you was ill, and could not

not order for yourself. My brother said indeed, that you would give him the money before he set out, and perhaps you did so?"

"No indeed," replied Rosaura, "I am his debtor still on this account also: and as I acknowledge I never conversed with the worthy Signor Anselmo upon the subject, I cannot contradict your statement of the amount of the sum for the accommodation you have afforded me of these apartments, and I am sensible it is a very trifling compensation for the anxiety and trouble I have occasioned in this household."

"Oh, it is not so much the trouble," returned Beatrice; "but I can't help suspecting, now it is put into my head, that my wise brother, who is so loath to trust to my discretion, does not chuse to let me know the true reason of his taking a stranger into his house: and besides, if he wants to do a charitable action, let him give his spare money to some good Father,

Father, such as Father Mavido, to distribute as he thinks best—for every body else does so—and then the blessings that come from the needy are more holy, and will do his soul more good!"

" Of that Signor Anselmo himself must judge," said Rosaura : " it appears that I must reimburse you eighteen crowns, five tarins, and six grains, which you have expended for me—here they are; and forty two crowns for the lodging will settle my account with your benevolent brother, except that I must ever remain his debtor for a kind and generous concern I can only repay with profitless gratitude. As I shall remove this evening, I shall not probably find another opportunity of expressing the chagrin I cannot but feel, at the disturbance which the brutality of the Duke di Brandosi occasioned in your habitation, and at the alarm you experienced. I must be cautious that he do not learn my future residence, that I may not

not only shield myself from his intrusion, but that I may protect others from his insolence."

"I think, Signora, with due deference," said Beatrice, "that you will act prudently: and suppose at the same time, you conceal from my wise brother where you are going to live, because then he cannot let his favourite Count Orvino into the secret; and if neither of them knows it, people cannot go on you know, to say what they do now."

Rosaura felt an indignant suffusion colour her cheek at this hint; but she suppressed her emotion, and calmly thanked Madame Beatrice for her disinterested advice, who triumphed exceedingly that once in her life she had possessed the power of acting so important a part, unchecked by the controul of her brother, and that she had been able to impose her will and her sentiments on so celebrated a personage as the beautiful Signora Ruvello.

Rosaura

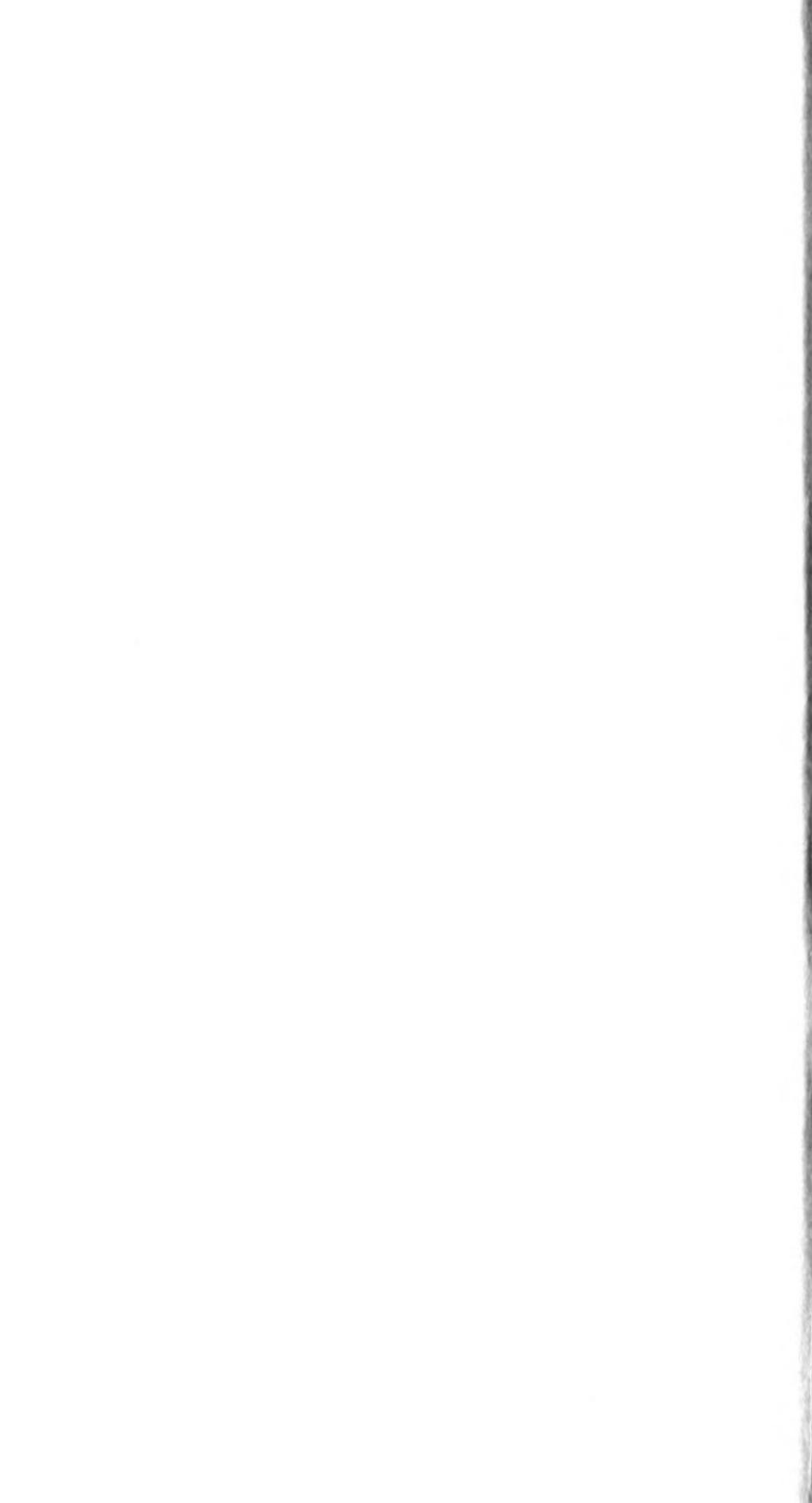
Rosaura accompanied only by her faithful Maria, quitted the mansion of the worthy Anselmo, with scarcely twenty crowns in her possession, oppressed by the languor of a recent sickness, and the ~~in~~-quietude incident to her situation, dreading likewise lest Ruvello should have already heard the calumnious reports relative to Count Orvino and herself, which, as Signora Beatrice was no stranger to them, must be, she concluded, in every mouth; and in almost equal terror, lest from the unlucky combination of circumstances which had reduced her to her present destitute condition and powerless insignificance, Ruvello should suspect her of negligence towards his interests, or extreme imprudence in her own conduct.

END OF VOL. I.



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